

## **THE TEMPTATIONS OF JESUS**

THE TEMPTATIONS OF JESUS

With Special Reference to the History  
of Their Interpretation

By

James Brewton Berry

A.B., Wofford College; B.D., Yale University;  
Day Fellow at the University of Edinburgh

Presented to

The Faculty of The University of Edinburgh



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## P R E F A C E

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PART I

S O U R C E S

## Chapter I - The Records

Our gospels give us three accounts of the temptation of Jesus. Mark 1:12-13 contains 30 words in the Greek text; Matthew 4:1-11, 185 words; and Luke 4:1-13, 204 words. There are differences, moreover, not only in the length of the accounts, but in the details. Mark makes a bare mention of the fact of the temptation, while the other two evangelists describe the particular alternatives that were presented to the Master. Mark describes the Spirit as "driving" Jesus into the wilderness; Matthew says that Jesus was "led up of the Spirit"; and Luke that he was "led in the Spirit". Mark states that he was tempted throughout the forty days, Matthew that it was at the end of the period, and Luke implies that he was tempted during his whole sojourn but that these three particular temptations came at the close. Mark mentions the presence of the wild beasts, but the other evangelists omit this reference. Matthew and Mark speak of the ministration of angels, which is not found in Luke. Nor do Matthew and Luke agree as to the words spoken either by Jesus or by the devil. (Cf. Mt. 4:3 and Lk. 4:3; Mt. 4 and Lk. 4; Mt. 8-9 and Lk. 5-7.) The most conspicuous inconsistency, however, is the difference in the order of the temptations, as given in the first and third gospels.

Consequently, the first problem that confronts one who would understand this experience of Jesus is that of determining what is the most authentic account

of the incident. Does Mark give us the historic basis for the story, upon which Matthew and Luke have elaborated? Or is Mark's account an attempt to summarize what he found in some source? Has Matthew copied from Luke, or Luke from Matthew? Or have they both, and perhaps Mark also, derived their information from some common source which is now lost? And if this be the case, was that source written or oral? These are some of the problems that beset him who attempts to discover just what happened at this time in Jesus' life.

Some of the answers to these questions have been so generally accepted by scholars that I shall not discuss them. I shall assume that Matthew did not use Luke, nor that Luke knew Matthew. It cannot be doubted that both Matthew and Luke had Mark before them when they wrote. I shall assume, finally, that there was a second principal source, "S", which Matthew and Luke employed, and that this was a written Greek document.<sup>1</sup> "S" began with an account of John's preaching, the baptism, and the temptation, and contained both teachings of Jesus and narratives about him.

Matthew and Luke certainly derived their accounts of the temptation from this written Greek source. (1)  
Of the 185 words in Matthew's account, 107 are identically

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<sup>1</sup> I shall follow Bacon in the use of the terms "S" and "Q". "Q" equals Mt., plus Lk., minus Mk., minus peculiar material of Mt., minus peculiar material of Lk. "S" equals "Q", plus relatively unknown material in Mk., Mt., and Lk., plus other unknown material. I.e., "Q" is double tradition material; but "S" is the source used by the evangelists.

parallel to Luke, and many others are essentially parallel, e.g., "stone" and "stones". (2) Both Matthew and Luke relate three temptations. (3) The two stories are essentially the same. (4) The quotations are taken from the LXX, and in quoting Deut. 6:13 both have made the same change adapting it to the context. (5) The rare word *πτερούγιον* is found elsewhere only in Daniel 9:27. (6) The variations can be easily accounted for. (Cf. Harnack<sup>1</sup>, Castor<sup>2</sup>, Salmon<sup>3</sup>.)

But did Mark use the account of the temptation as found in "Q"? It is difficult to understand why an incident as bare as that related in Mk. 1:12-13 should have survived at all. Streeter<sup>4</sup> says: "Mark's brief allusion to the temptation is less original than the longer account. An original tradition is always detailed and picturesque and would hardly recall as does Mark a temptation to do nothing in particular. A later author might well so allude to a story whose details were familiar, but which he could not entirely omit to notice in a life of the master." Bacon<sup>5</sup> maintains that Mark used "S", but in this section borrowed only the external elements, to show how Jesus is superior to Satan, to the wild beasts, and to the angels. Furthermore, it is Mark, rather than Matthew and Luke, who shows signs of the later

1 Harnack: Sayings of Jesus.  
 2 Castor: Matthew's Sayings of Jesus.  
 3 Salmon: Human Elements in the Gospels.  
 4 Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem, p. 168.  
 5 B.W. Bacon: The Beginning of Gospel Story, p.13.



apologetic in dealing with the incident. Case<sup>1</sup> holds that "the gospel writers, true to the interests that were uppermost in their age, saw in the temptation of Jesus a demonstration of his authority rather than a crisis in his own religious experience. In his official capacity as Son of God and founder of a new religious regime it was to be expected that he would display his superiority over the satanic prince of evil. In the older form of the story as preserved in Matthew and Luke, the supremacy of Jesus is shown by his very refusal to make any exhibition of miracles. Presumably it lay within his power to perform these proposed wonders, but as suggestions of the tempter they must be rejected. For the circle of Christians where this form of the tradition first crystalized, miracles as a test of Jesus' authority were less highly esteemed than was his prophetic equipment to speak the word of God. ... But other Christians saw in the temptation what appeared to them a more significant triumph for Jesus. In Mark's version no mention was made of Jesus' refusal to perform miracles. On the contrary, the whole performance was transported into the sphere of supernaturalism. Jesus was with the wild beasts, who, contrary to all their natural impulses, did him no harm. And instead of declining angelic assistance, as in the older tradition, it was now affirmed that during the temptation he had actually been attended by ministering

1 S.J. Case: Jesus, pp. 261f.

angels. It was entirely natural that Christian interpretation of the temptation should move farther and farther away from the picture of a realistic struggle in the personal experience of Jesus." And so, when we find the "S" account portraying Jesus as a son who submits perfectly to the will of God, restrains himself in the exercise of miraculous power, and refuses the assistance of angels, and the Markan account representing him as one superior to the wild beasts, miraculously protected from them, ministered to by angels, we cannot but infer that the latter is a much later adaptation of a more primitive, original, account.

When we compare the date of "S" with that of the second gospel, there is a possibility that Mark had this source at his disposal. Whether we agree with Lake<sup>1</sup> that "every year after 50 A. D. is increasingly improbable for the production of 'Q'," or with Bacon in dating it about 65, in either case it is sufficiently earlier than Mark to suppose that he had it available. On the other hand, it is quite easy to understand why Mark did not employ it more extensively. The portrait of Jesus as "meek and lowly", which "S" presented, and which conforms so nearly to that of Paul, was not in harmony with that of a "strong Son of God" which Mark was drawing. Consequently, Mark

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<sup>1</sup> Kirsopp Lake: Art. in The Expositor for 1909.

did not have a high estimate of the value of this source.

Finally the internal evidence points strongly to the fact that Mark used "S". This, however, is an open question with scholars. Bacon, it appears to me, presents very strong evidence for supporting the theory<sup>1</sup>; although scholars generally are not willing to accept it. Space will not permit, nor does my thesis demand, my presenting a compendium of the evidence.

The conclusion, then, is that behind our Matthew, Luke, and perhaps Mark, there was this document "S", which contained a story of the temptation of Jesus, and from this source the evangelists have derived their accounts. Let us reconstruct, as nearly as we can, this original narrative.

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1 B.W.Bacon: Beginnings of Gospel Story, pp. xx ff.  
The Gospel of Mark  
The Story of Jesus, Ch. V.



Mt. vv. 1-2 - Lk. 1-2.

τότε , (Mt. 1,5,10,11) is characteristic of Mt. It is found in Mt. 90 times; Mk. 6 times; Lk. 15 times, Acts 21 times; John 10 times. Cf. Hawkins<sup>1</sup>.

ἀνήχθη (Mt.) and ἦγετο (Lk.). Harnack<sup>2</sup> accepts Matthew's form as preferable. He maintains that the imperfect is almost peculiar to Luke, and that ἀνῆλθον<sup>x</sup> is certainly original, for it is found in Mt. only in this place, and it gives a correct touch of local coloring - the wilderness being on a high ground - and elsewhere in Lk. the word occurs frequently. Lk. dropped it because he did not understand its significance. Also, vv. 1-2 are characteristically Lukan. Cf. Easton<sup>3</sup>.

πειρασθῆναι. Easton accepts this as the original expression, as it gives a "hard" conception, while Mk. softened it and Lk. followed Mk. On the other hand, this expression is suspicious because of Matthew's tendency to emphasize the divine purpose working itself out in the life of Jesus. Cf. Allen<sup>4</sup>, Castor<sup>5</sup>, Cary<sup>6</sup>.

πειραζόμενος is perhaps original.

νηστεύσας (Mt.) and οὐκ ἔφαγεν οὐδὲν (Lk.). Harnack<sup>7</sup> says that Lk. misunderstood the technical term of Mt. (and "S") and replaced it with this extravagant expression. Moulton<sup>8</sup>, however, holds that Mt. has made

1 Hawkins: Horae Synopticae, p. 8.

2 Harnack, op.cit.

3 Easton: The Gospel according to St. Luke, p. 48.

4 Allen: St. Matthew, in the I. C. C., p. 27.

5 Castor, op. cit., p. 22.

6 Cary: The Synoptic Gospels.

7 Harnack, op. cit., p. 45.

8 Moulton: art. in The Expositor for 1909.



the change in accordance with his habit of abbreviating. Cf. βασιλεύει in 3:11 (Mk. 1:7); and 10:37 (Lk. 14:26). In the latter case *μισεῖ* is supported by the Fourth Gospel, and would hardly have been introduced by a gentile evangelist. Moulton states, in commenting on Harnack's choice, that only conformity to a theory would suggest that Lk. ousted the clear phrase of Mt. in favor of one which he knew would make readers stumble. It appears, moreover, that Lk. hesitated to include expressions that would cause his gentile readers to stumble. E.g., he omitted the injunction to pluck out the eye that causes one to stumble, etc., which he found in Mk. 9:43, 47, and which Mt. employed in 5:29,30. And instead of making the language of his source stronger, he often softens or omits. Cf. Cadbury<sup>1</sup>.

καὶ τεσσαράκοντα νύκτας. Harnack<sup>2</sup> says that Lk. omitted this as superfluous, agreeing with Mk. However, the shorter text is preferable; and Mt. 12:40 would lead us to think that this is a Matthaeian phrase and therefore his addition.

ὥστερον is doubtless Matthaeian. It is found in Mt. 7 times, in Mk. 1, in Lk. 1, and in Jn.1. See Hawkins<sup>3</sup>.

πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου and ἐν τῷ πνεύματι (Lk. v.1).

These are characteristic Lukan expressions. Cf. Acts

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1 Cadbury: The Style and Literary Method of Luke, p.118, in the Harvard Theological Studies.

2 Harnack, op. cit., p. 45.

3 Hawkins, op. cit.

6:3,5; 7:55; 11:24. See Harnack<sup>1</sup>; Castor<sup>2</sup>; Easton<sup>3</sup>.

ὑπέστρεψεν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἑορδάνου. ὑποστρέφω is undoubtedly Lukan. Hawkins<sup>4</sup> finds that it occurs 21 times in Lk., 11 in Acts, and never in Mt., Mk. or Jn.

συντελεσθεῖσθαι αὐτῶν is probably Lukan. συντελεῖν is wanting in Mt., but occurs three times in Lk.

### Mt. 3 - Lk. 3.

προσελθὼν. This is Matthaean. προσέοιμαι is found in Mt. 52 times; Mk. 5 times; Lk.-Acts 20 times.

ὁ πειράζων. Harnack accepts this as original. It is difficult to understand why Matthew would have changed.

Mt. has οἱ λίθοι οὗτοι ἄρτοι γίνονται and Lk. has τῷ λίθῳ τούτῳ ἵνα γένηται ἄρτος. Harnack accepts the Matthaean form as original, because he sees no reason why Mt. should have made the change. Castor and Allen point out the fact that Mt. has a predilection for plurals. Moulton<sup>5</sup> believes that Mt. made the change in view of the fact that a single loaf "would be absurdly insufficient to satisfy hunger, if the loaves were like those they make in Palestine today." Mt. was probably rationalizing, while Lk. left the expression as he found it.

### Mt. v. 4-and.Lk. v. 4.

ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν. Harnack rejects this as being.

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1 Harnack, op. cit.

2 Castor, op. cit., p. 22.

3 Easton, op. cit., p. 48.

4 Hawkins, op. cit., p. 23.

5 Moulton, op. cit.

characteristic of Matthew's solemn style. It is quite likely, of course, in such instances as this, that both evangelists have made a change. In our reconstruction of the Source, however, we must not speculate as to the expression that was used, but must choose between the two renderings that are before us. In this case, Luke's shorter form is perhaps preferable.

ἀλλ' ἐπὶ παντὶ ὄρματι ἐκπροσευομένῳ διὰ στόματος θεοῦ.

Matthew has probably completed the quotation from the LXX. There is no reason why Luke should have omitted it had he found it in his source. We know, moreover, that Matthew frequently completes quotations, and also adds them.

πρὸς αὐτὸν. πρὸς used in speaking to, is found 99 times in Lk., and 52 times in Acts.

It is therefore certainly Lukan. Cf. Harnack<sup>1</sup>, and Hawkins<sup>2</sup>.

ὅτι. This is probably Luke's addition.

Mt. 5-6 and Lk. 9-11.

τὴν ἁγίαν πόλιν. Matthew has probably made the change.

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<sup>1</sup> Harnack, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Hawkins, op. cit., p. 21.

Jerusalem is found also in the Gospel of the Hebrews. Cf. Harnack<sup>1</sup>, Castor<sup>2</sup>, Cary<sup>3</sup>.

παραλαμβάνει(Mt.) and ἤγαγεν (Lk.). The historic presents probably belong to the original document. Harnack<sup>4</sup> notes that the historic present is always avoided by Lk. It is more correct to say that both Mt. and Lk. show a tendency to avoid this construction. Hawkins<sup>5</sup> finds that it occurs 78 times in Mt.; 4, or 6, times in Lk., and 151 times in Mk. Allen<sup>6</sup> says: "The editor of the gospel (Mt.) shows a distinct tendency to remove historic presents from a source before him. In Mk. there are 151 such tenses. Of these, 72 are cases of λέγει or λέγουσιν . Of the remaining 79 the editor of the first gospel omits or alters 69, retaining only 10. Yet in 3:1 - 4:17 there are 7 such tenses. This would be explicable if the editor were following a source of which the use of the historic present was a marked feature." We should therefore include in "S" the uses of the historic present unless there is strong evidence for doing otherwise. Cf., also, Cadbury<sup>7</sup>.

ἐντεῦθεν. It is impossible to say whether Lk. added this or Mt. omitted it as superfluous. Harnack<sup>8</sup>

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1 Harnack, op. cit., p. 46.

2 Castor, op. cit., p. 22.

3 Cary, op. cit.

4 Harnack, op. cit., p. 45.

5. Hawkins, op. cit., pp. 143 ff.

6 Allen, op. cit., p. lx.

7 Cadbury, op. cit., p. 158.

8 Harnack, op. cit., p. 46.



discards it as Lukan, on the basis that it is found elsewhere in Lk., but never in Mt. or Mk. Easton<sup>1</sup> also considers it Lukan. Moulton<sup>2</sup> states that it is found elsewhere in Lk., but only once; and that it is more reasonable to say that Mt. dropped it as otiose, and Lk. kept it because it was in "S".

τοῦ διαφυλάξαι σε. Lk. is continuing the quotation.  
ὅτι. This is Lukan.

#### Mt. 7 - Lk. 12.

ἔφη. Harnack accepts this as original, but Easton<sup>1</sup>, holds that it is Matthaean. It is found in Mt. 13 (15) times; Mk. 3; Lk. 3. In using his sources Lk. at times changes it to εἶπεν. Cadbury<sup>3</sup> says that Mt. appears to add ἔφη to Mk. about as often as Lk. omits it. Very likely the source used an historic present here, and both evangelists changed.

πάλιν. Harnack<sup>4</sup> says that Lk. avoids the use of πάλιν, on the grounds that it is found in Mt. 17 times, 29 in Mk., 47 in Jn., but only 2 or 3 in Lk., and 5 in Acts. It was probably in the original document.

εἰσονται. Matthew's γέγραπται is original. Harnack<sup>4</sup> points out that this is peculiar to Lk., being found in

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1 Easton, op. cit., p. 49.

2 Moulton, op. cit., p. 414.

3 Cadbury, op. cit., p. 169.

4 Harnack, op. cit., p. 46.

Lk. 2:24; Acts 2:16; 13:40; and elsewhere only in Rom. 4:18.

Mt. 8-9 - Lk. 5-7.

παραλαμβάνει αὐτὸν εἰς ὄρεσ ὑψηλὸν λίαν (Mt.)  
and ἀναγαγὼν (Lk.). Easton<sup>1</sup> says that παραλαμβάνειν is  
a "Q" (i.e. "S") word, but that Luke's narrative is true  
to vision psychology, and Mt. may easily have thought  
ἀναγαγὼν too vague. Harnack<sup>2</sup>, on the contrary, be-  
lieves that Lk. is rationalizing by using the vaguer  
expression, leaving the reader to suppose, probably, that  
Jesus was raised up into the air so as to be able to see  
everything. Moulton<sup>3</sup> asks: "Are we justified in credit-  
ing "Q" (i.e., "S") with the 'exceeding high mountain'  
when the very vague ἀναγαγὼν so obviously demanded ex-  
pansion? That Matthew does thus interpret is demonstrable  
in many passages." The probability, then, is that Mt.  
is rationalizing, while Lk. retains the vague expression.

δείκνυσιν (Mt.) and ἔδειξεν (Lk.). See above, Mt.5,  
on the use of the historic present.

κόσμου (Mt.) and οἰκουμένης (Lk.). Mt. probably  
has the original. οἰκουμένης is found 8 times in Lk.,  
1 in Mt., never in Mk. and Jn.

πρὸς. This is Matthaean. Cf. 2:11; 18:26; 18:29.

The words of the devil in Mt. 9 are to be preferred

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<sup>1</sup> Easton, op. cit., p.49.

<sup>2</sup> Harnack, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> Moulton, op.cit., p. 414.

to Lk. Lk. has allowed his theology to enter in here, elaborating on what he found in "S". Cadbury<sup>1</sup> writes: "Satan, the arch-demon, is real to Luke, fully as real as to the other evangelists and to Paul, if not more so. According to Luke, Jesus 'continued in temptations' throughout his ministry, and Satan left Jesus only 'for a season' after his initial temptation. Satan 'entered into Judas' and 'asked to have' all the disciples, 'that he might sift them as wheat.' It was Satan himself who 'bound' Jesus' patients with a 'bond', like 'the woman with a spirit of weakness who was bent double and could not unbend herself at all', or 'oppressed' them like a tyrant, but who 'fell like lightning' when at Jesus' name even the demons proved subject to the Seventy. For it is the 'power of darkness' or the 'power of Satan' that opposes the gospel, a 'son of the devil', or one whose heart Satan has filled." The probability points to Mt. as having preserved the original.

ἐν στικμῇ χρόνου. Harnack<sup>2</sup> and Easton<sup>3</sup> think that Lk. is interpolating.

ἐν ὀπίον. This is found in Lk. 36 times, and never in Mt. or Mk. It is obviously Lukan. Cf. Harnack<sup>2</sup> and Easton<sup>3</sup>.

#### Mt. 10 and Lk. 8.

λέγει (Mt.) and ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν (Lk.) Matthew's

<sup>1</sup> Cadbury: The Making of Luke-Acts, p. 271.

<sup>2</sup> Harnack, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Easton, op. cit., p. 49.



simpler form is preferable. Lk. uses ἀποκλιθεῖς with a verb of saying quite as often as do the other evangelists. In using his sources we find Lk. retaining it 8 times, and adding it 8 times when it was not in the source. Cf. Cadbury<sup>1</sup>.

ὑπάγε σατανᾶ (Mt.). This, it seems to me, is certainly original. Although Harnack<sup>2</sup>, who follows Mt. so closely, discards it as an interpolation. He says, "These cannot be original. If so, why did Lk. omit them? ὑπάγειν occurs once in Lk., never in Acts, 20 times in Mt., 15 in Mk., 33 in John. Mt. possibly took it from 16:23, where Mk. 8:33 also has it." Castor<sup>3</sup> agrees with Harnack. On the other hand, it is difficult to understand why Mt. would have inserted the expression, while there are many reasons for believing that Lk. omitted it. (1) A comparative study of the use of ὑπάγειν by the gospel writers indicates that Lk. avoided the word. Cadbury<sup>4</sup> says that very likely it seemed to him vulgar. (2) In changing the order of the temptations and placing this one second, it was impossible for Lk. to insert ὑπάγε σατανᾶ. Cf. Easton<sup>5</sup>. Salmon<sup>6</sup> writes: "It seems most natural that the story should come to a close with our Lord's indignant 'Begone Satan', when the tempter makes the outrageous demand of worship. Indeed it would seem sur-

<sup>1</sup> Cadbury; The Style and Literary Method of Luke,

<sup>2</sup> Harnack, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Castor, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Cadbury, op. cit., p. 173.

<sup>5</sup> Easton, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>6</sup> Salmon, op. cit., p. 68.



prising that he should continue his efforts after so decided a repulse; and so St. Luke appears to have felt, for according to the testimony of the oldest MSS. he omits the ὑπαγε σατανᾶ altogether, though later authorities have in this respect assimilated his account to St. Matthew's. It is, however, much easier to understand why St. Luke should have omitted these words, when found in connection with what was not the concluding temptation, than why St. Matthew should have gratuitously inserted them."

Mt. 11 and Lk. 13.

ἀφίστην (Mt.) and ἀπέστη (Lk.). Matthew has the original. Hawkins<sup>1</sup> shows that ἀφίστημι is found 10 times in Luke-Acts, but never in Mt., Mk., or Jn.

προσῆλθεν belongs to the style of Mt., being found more than 50 times. See above on Mt. 3.

ἄγγελοι διηκόνουν αὐτῷ. Mt. has taken this from Mk. It is difficult to understand why Lk. would have omitted it had he found it in "S", and in Mk. Cf. Harnack<sup>2</sup>, Castor<sup>3</sup>, Easton<sup>4</sup>.

συντελέσας πάντα πειρασμὸν. This is probably Lukan. συντελεῖν is wanting in Mt. and occurs twice elsewhere in Lk.

ἄχρι καιροῦ. Probably Lukan. Harnack rejects it because it weakens the significance of the temptations, and it occurs again in the New Testament only in Acts 13:11

<sup>1</sup> Hawkins, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Harnack, op. cit.

Hawkins<sup>1</sup> shows that  $\tau\chi\rho\iota$  occurs 4 times in Lk., 15 in Acts, once in Mk. and never in Mt. and Jn.

$\kappa\alpha\iota$  and  $\delta\epsilon$  . Lk. has a preference for  $\delta\epsilon$  over  $\kappa\alpha\iota$  .  
Cf. Cadbury<sup>2</sup>

### The order of the temptations.

The most conspicuous difference between the Matthaean and the Lukan account of the incident is that of the order of the temptations. The probability, however, is that Mt. has preserved the original order. (1) The command of Jesus, "Begone Satan", would certainly belong to the final temptation; but Lk., in placing this one second, found it necessary to omit these words. (2) If we take this to be an account of a crisis in the religious life of Jesus, and therefore psychological, we must accept the Matthaean order; because Mt. has preserved the psychological and logical order, while Lk. has arranged them geographically or christologically. In Mt. the temptations proceed from lesser to greater - to satisfy hunger, and to possess the world - and Jesus' answers to the tempter pass through a similar process. - not to live by bread alone, not to tempt God, and finally to surrender one's self completely to God. (3) Lk. apparently has changed the order to make the temp-

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<sup>1</sup> Hawkins, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Cadbury, op. cit., p. 142.

tations more acceptable geographically. Jesus, by this arrangement, merely has to go from the wilderness to Jerusalem, rather than from the wilderness to Jerusalem, and back to the wilderness, where, presumably, the temptation to possess the world is presented to him. (4) Perhaps Lk. has changed the order to suit his christology, believing that Jesus' words to Satan, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God' (meaning himself), are the strongest, and possess a finality which the others do not. So John Milton seems to understand them. (5) Matthew's order is preferable, because it would seem that the last temptation is that in which Satan reveals himself. In the first two temptations there is no indication that Jesus recognized the devil; but the third, to gain the kingdoms of the world, is obviously satanic, inasmuch as it depends upon an act of submission to him. It would hardly be appropriate to have another temptation, after Jesus perceives that they are diabolic.

If, therefore, we are dealing with an experience that occurred in the mind of Jesus, rather than an external and literal event, we should accept the originality of the Matthaean order, which is logically and psychologically preferable.



Mk. 1:12-13.

καὶ εὐθὺς is characteristic of Mk. Apparently he uses it as a connecting link, without any idea of immediacy.

ἐκβάλλει. It is not possible to determine which evangelist has used the original word in describing the activity of the Spirit. It is quite possible that Mt. and Lk. substituted the milder "led" for the harsher ἐκβάλλει. On the other hand, Mk. is fond of strong words, and probably made the change himself.

μετὰ τῶν θηρίων. Why has Mk. introduced this reference to the wild beasts? (1) A majority of expositors have expressed the thought that Mk. is merely completing the terrible picture of the wilderness. Cf., e.g., Montefiore<sup>1</sup>. There are a sufficient number of instances in the gospel to lead us to the conclusion that it was his habit to do so. Williams<sup>2</sup> says that Mk. possessed the poetic faculty of visualizing a scene. He displays freshness and objectivity, and a sympathy with nature. He mentions colors (6:39; 9:3; 16:5; 15:17); he sketches landscapes (4:35ff.; 5:1ff.; 9:2); he relates that incidents occurred in the open air; he frequently mentions plants (6:39; 11:8; 15:17; 15:19; 15:36) and animals (1:6; 1:10; 1:13; 5:11ff.; 6:38ff.; 11:2ff.; 14:12ff.; 11:30; 11:72). He heightens the vividness of pictures by use of adjectives and adverbs. (2) Mk. might have

<sup>1</sup> Montefiore: The Synoptic Gospels.

<sup>2</sup> Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem, pp.393f.

been influenced by similar incidents in other religious literature. E.g., in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs we find such promises to the righteous.

"The devil will flee from you, and the wild beasts will fear you, and the Lord will love you, and the angels will cleave to you." (Naphtali 8:8). "And every wild beast shall ye subdue." (Issachar 7:7). And the converse, "But him who doeth not that which is good, both angels and all men shall curse, and the devil shall make him as his own peculiar instrument, and every wild beast shall master him." (Naphtali 8:6). (3) If, however, we accept the view that Mk. had available a copy of "S" which contained an account of the temptation essentially as Mt. and Lk. have preserved it, then we may say that Mk. received his suggestion, not only from non-biblical literature, but from Psalm 91, a portion of which, according to Mt. and Lk. the tempter quoted to Jesus. In this Psalm there is promised to the man whom God loves the protection of angels, and safety in the presence of wild beasts. Mk. did not approve of the presentation of Jesus/<sup>as</sup>refusing the assistance of angels, which he found in "S", but he took over the external elements which the Psalm suggested and which appealed to him, and portrayed a Son of God, which conformed more to his own conception. Cf. Bacon<sup>1</sup>. Some such theory best account for Mark's μετὰ τῶν ἁγγέλων and οἱ ἄγγελοι διηκόνουν αὐτῷ. Mt. borrowed the latter from Mk.

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<sup>1</sup> B.W.Bacon: Beginnings of Gospel Story, p. 13.

The Probable Form of the "S" Narrative

Καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνήχθη εἰς τὴν ἔρημον ὑπὸ τοῦ  
πνεύματος. Καὶ ἦν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἡμέρας τεσσαράκοντα  
πειραζόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου. Καὶ οὐκ ἔφαγεν οὐδὲν  
ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις. Καὶ ἐπείνασεν.

Καὶ ὁ πειράζων εἶπεν αὐτῷ Ἐὶ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ  
εἰπὲ τῷ λίθῳ τούτῳ ἵνα γένηται ἄρτος. καὶ ἀπεκρίθη  
ὁ Ἰησοῦς γέγραπται οὐκ ἐπ' ἄρτι μόνω ζήσεται ὁ  
ἄνθρωπος.

Παραλαμβάνει δὲ αὐτὸν ὁ διόβολος εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ  
καὶ ἕστησεν ἐπὶ τὸ πτερύγιον τοῦ ἱεροῦ καὶ λέγει  
αὐτῷ Εὶ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ βάλε σεαυτὸν κάτω γέγραπται  
γὰρ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγγέλοις αὐτοῦ ἐντελεῖται περὶ σοῦ καὶ  
ἐπὶ χειρῶν ἀρουσίν σε μήποτε προσκόψῃς πρὸς λίθον  
τὸν πόδα σου.

Ἔφη αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς Πάλιν γέγραπται οὐκ ἐκπειράσεις  
κύριον τὸν θεόν σου.

Καὶ ἀναγαγὼν αὐτὸν δείκνυσιν αὐτῷ πάσας τὰς  
βασιλείας τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν καὶ εἶπεν  
αὐτῷ ὁ διάβολος Ταῦτά σοι πάντα δώσω ἔὰν προσκυνήσῃς  
μοι.

Καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς Ὑπάγε σατανᾶ γέγραπται  
γὰρ κύριον τὸν θεόν σου προσκυνήσεις καὶ αὐτῷ μόνῳ  
λατρεύσεις.

Καὶ ἀφίησιν αὐτὸν ὁ διάβολος.

Matthew and Luke \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew .....  
.....

Luke .....  
.....

Mark \_\_\_\_\_  
.....



"And Jesus was led up into the desert by the Spirit. And he was in the desert forty days while the devil tempted him. And during these days he ate nothing, and he began to feel hungry.

And the tempter said to him, "If you are God's son, tell this stone to become a loaf." And Jesus replied, "It is written 'Man is not to live on bread alone'."

And the devil conveyed him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are God's son throw yourself down; for it is written:

'He will give his angels charge of you', and

'They will bear you on their hands,

Lest you strike your foot against a stone'."

Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God'."

And he lifted him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their grandeur; and the devil said to him, "I will give you all that, if you will worship me." And Jesus told him, "Begone, Satan, for it is written, 'You must worship the Lord your God, and serve Him alone'."

And the devil left him.\*

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\* It will be seen that the narrative contains υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ and not ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ. This fact has led Stewart, in The Temptation of Jesus, to maintain that Jesus was tempted as a son of God rather than as The Son of God. However, the absence of the article in the predicate is not sufficient grounds for such an assumption. (Cf. Robertson's Grammar of the Greek Testament, pp. 767, 790, 794. It is perhaps best to translate the phrase God's son, which Moffatt uses in his translation of the New Testament.

PART II

H I S T O R I C A L



## Chapter II

## The Temptation as an Outward Transaction

Few incidents have been studied more scrupulously, or have been interpreted in more numerous and various ways, than has this event in the life of Christ. Nor is it difficult to understand why this story has attracted the attention, and solicited the thought, and appealed to the imagination of laymen, preachers, and scholars. Perhaps the principal motive that has prompted investigators has been of an apologetic nature, for this story apparently conflicts with doctrines of the sinlessness, the omniscience, and the divinity of Jesus. Many interpretations of the incident, then, have been mere attempts to prove that the temptation of Jesus in no way contradicts certain dogmas of his person. But there has been another motive - that of simply desiring to know and to understand the mind of Jesus. For here, in a few words, told in a simple style, is an account of an experience of Jesus which marks a turning point in his life. To him it must have been of tremendous importance. It took him from the quiet, peaceful life with friends and family at Nazareth, and sent him forth into a life of deprivation, hostility, and suffering. Also, it is one of the very few autobiographical records of his life that we possess. Of all his deep experiences, here is one that he considered of sufficient importance to be passed on to his disciples. He seldom - almost never - talked about himself. Then why did he violate that habit, in relating his experiences of baptism and temptation? It is no

surprise that Christians have studied this story, then; for through it they may hope to see into the very soul of Christ.

The incident has been understood and interpreted in innumerable ways. I have no doubt that the disciples, when they heard it for the first time, disagreed as to its meaning and significance. The author of "S", who, let us venture to say, was the first to write it down, doubtless altered it somewhat, and put the stamp of his interpretation upon it. Mark, as we have seen, accepted the story in an entirely different manner from that in which he found it. Matthew and Luke, although they followed their source more accurately than did Mark, did not hesitate to change the story as they saw fit. John, finally, rejected the whole incident as being incompatible with Jesus, as he conceived of him, and took pains to show that there never was such an experience in his life.

Some will be inclined to doubt the possibility of our ever being able to understand the temptation experience of Jesus, since the record of it has undergone so much alteration and interpretation before reaching us. Fortunately, Matthew and Luke were unusually faithful here in the use of their source; in fact, it is rather surprising that they did not change it more than they did. They did not enlarge upon it, and disfigure it, as they did some of the miracle stories; but they transferred it to their gospels essentially as they found it in their source. Now, as to how accurately "S" has preserved the story, it is, of course, im-

possible to say. I shall attempt to determine that question in a later chapter.

From the earliest time, therefore, the temptation story was understood and interpreted in many ways. It would be an uninviting and unrewarding, if not impossible, task to collect all the written explanations that have been proposed. For what preacher has failed to preach on it? what commentator, to comment? what biographer of Jesus, to explain this incident? In the following pages I shall endeavor to describe and classify the various types of interpretations that have been advanced.

The many interpretations I have classified in the following manner in the effort to make the mass of literature on the subject a little more comprehensible:

- I. The temptations as an outward transaction
  - A. Between Jesus and the Devil
    - 1. As a simple historical incident
    - 2. As undertaken by Jesus to fulfil prophecy
    - 3. As undertaken for the instruction of disciples
    - 4. As undertaken by Satan in order to learn who Jesus was
    - 5. As undertaken by Satan to learn who Jesus was, and endured by Jesus for our instruction
  - B. Between Jesus and the devil in disguise
  - C. Between Jesus and the devil as a spirit
- II. The temptation as a dream or a vision
  - A. As a vision
    - 1. Produced by Satan
    - 2. Produced by God
    - 3. Produced by the environment
  - B. As a dream
- III. The temptation story as a myth



A. With an historic basis

B. As a pure myth

C. As a literary product

D. As a parable

#### IV. The temptation as an inner experience

A. Produced by a personal devil

B. Produced by external facts and conditions

C. Arising in Jesus' own mind

1. Concerning his use of supernatural power
2. Concerning the nature and method of his Messianic activity
3. Concerning political problems
4. Concerning his divinity
5. Concerning non-Messianic religious leadership.

It will be seen that no two of the writers whom I shall discuss in the following pages agree on all points in their interpretation of the temptation. To classify them, therefore, has not been a simple task; and many of them would perhaps resent being placed in the category to which they have been assigned. This classification, like all classifications, is purely arbitrary, and I shall make this point clearer in the following pages. Nor is the list exhaustive. There are many writers whom I have not included. However, I have endeavored to present those writings which, either from the standpoint of scholarship, or from the standpoint of their popular appeal and influence, have served as interpretations of the temptation narrative for Christian people; and I have included, also, some interpretations which, although lacking in scholarship and influence, are sufficiently ingenious or fantastic to be interesting.

A. The temptation as an outward transaction between Jesus and the devil.

1. As a simple historical incident.

Justin: Dialogue with Trypho, Ch. 103  
 Tertullian: Against Marcion, Book V, Ch. VI  
               Against Praxeas, Ch. I, and Ch. XXVI  
 The Clementine Homilies, No. XXI  
 The Recognitions of Clement, Ch. XXXIV  
 The Martyrdom of the Holy and Glorious Apostle  
       Bartholomew  
 Catherine D'Oyly: The History of the Life and Death  
                   of Our Blessed Savior (1801)  
 John Fleetwood: Life of Our Blessed Lord and Savior  
                   Jesus Christ (1885)  
 C. J. Ellicott: Historical Lectures on the Life of Our  
                   Lord Jesus Christ (1862)  
 Alfred Edersheim: Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah  
                   (1883)  
 R. B. Cook: The Story of Jesus (1889).

When our evangelists read the story of the temptation of Jesus, they probably accepted it as a literal account of an actual historical fact. That Luke understood it in this way is most likely, inasmuch as he changed the order of the temptations to make them conform more reasonably to the geographical setting. Mark was not interested in the thoughts and words that passed between Jesus and the devil, but he did preserve the external features of the story - Jesus' sojourn in the wilderness, the presence of the wild beasts, the attack of Satan, the ministration of angels. Matthew, being a Jew, perhaps understood this as an inner experience written in the style of Jewish midrash; but it would possibly be more accurate to say that Matthew accepted the story as an actual occurrence, without concern as to whether it were an outward transaction or an inner experience. Whichever it happened to have been would not have made it the less real

or true to him. But of this we cannot be certain. We are perhaps safer in saying that the evangelists understood the temptation as an outward transaction; that a personal devil, the "prince of this world", the head of the kingdom opposed to the kingdom of God, approached Jesus, the Messiah, spoke to him audibly, carried him from place to place, proposed certain attractive temptations whereby he hoped to corrupt Jesus, but he failed in his efforts. There is no indication of the fact that Satan was not visible, that he did not know Jesus, that Jesus did not recognize him, that they did not actually stand together on the pinnacle of the temple and on the mountain top, that they did not see all the kingdoms of the world, and that Satan, failing in his efforts, did not withdraw from the scene. No attempt is made to explain why the devil tempted Jesus, or how Jesus could be tempted, or why he should permit such an encounter. Apparently the story is told simply as an historical incident, without any attempt to pry into its purpose, its possibility, or its significance.

A great many ancient and modern writers have accepted the story in much the same way as did the evangelists. Justin believed that Satan was merely attempting "to contrive some mischief" against Jesus. He writes: "For this devil, when Jesus went up from the river Jordan, at the time when the voice spake to Him, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee', is recorded in the memoirs of the apostles to have come to Him and tempted Him, even so



far as to say to Him, 'Worship me'; and Christ answered him, 'Get thee behind me Satan'. ... For as he had deceived Adam, so he hoped that he might contrive some mischief against Christ also." Tertullian, likewise, appears to have considered this as Satan's effort to corrupt Jesus, whom he knew to be the Messiah. In writing against Marcion he says: "Even the devil according to our Gospel recognized Jesus in the temptation." In writing against Praxeas in the defense of the doctrine of the Trinity, Tertullian also appealed to the temptation story. "In various ways has the devil rivalled and resisted the truth. Sometimes his aim has been to destroy the truth by defending it. He maintains that there is only one Lord, the Almighty Creator of the world, in order that out of this doctrine of the unity he may fabricate a heresy. ... Here the old serpent has fallen out with himself, since, when he tempted Christ, he approached Him as 'The Son of God', surely intimating that God had a Son, even on the testimony of the very Scriptures, out of which he was at the moment forging his temptations." In the Clementine Homilies there is expressed the idea that Satan foresaw the glory which Christ would gain, and attempted to prevent it. "For once the king of the present time came to our King of righteousness, using no violence, for this was not in his power, but inducing and persuading, because the being persuaded lies in the power of every one. Approaching Him, therefore, as being king of things present, he said to the King of things future, 'All the kingdoms of the present

world are subject to me, also the gold and the silver, and all the luxury of this world are under my power. Wherefore, fall down and worship me, and I will give you all these things.' And this he said, knowing that after He worshipped him, he would have power also over Him, and thus would rob Him of the future glory and kingdom. But He, knowing all things, not only did not worship him, but would not receive aught of the things that were offered by him." A similar idea is expressed in the Recognitions of Clement.

Ellicott, in his Historical Lectures on the Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>1</sup> sees in the temptation an assault of Satan directed against the three portions of man's nature, body, spirit, and soul. "The now inaugurated Messiah confronts in spiritual conflict the fearful adversary of His Kingdom and of that race which He came to save. On the deep secrets of those mysterious forty days it is not meet that speculation should dwell. ... The events here related are to be accepted as real and literal occurrences. ... I could as soon doubt my own existence as doubt the completely outward nature of these forms of temptation, and their immediate connection with the personal agency of the personal Prince of Darkness. I could as soon accept the worst statements of the most degraded form of Arian creed as believe that this temptation arose from any internal strugglings or solicitations. I could as soon admit the most repulsive tenet of a dreary Socinianism, as deem that it was enhanced by any self-engendered enticements, or hold that it was aught else than the assault of a desperate and demoniacal malice from without,

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<sup>1</sup> PP. 110ff.



that recognized in the nature of man a possibility of falling, and that thus far consistently, though impiously, dared even in the person of the Son of Man to make proof of its hitherto resistless energies. ... I see in them three spiritual assaults directed against the three portions of our composite nature. To the body is presented the temptation of satisfying its wants by a display of power which would have tacitly abjured its dependence on the Father, and its perfect submission to His heavenly will. To the spirit of our Redeemer was addressed the temptation of using that power which belonged to Him as God to vindicate His own eternal nature, and to display by one dazzling miracle the true relation in which Jesus of Nazareth stood to men, and to angels, and to God. To the soul, the longing, appetitive, soul was addressed the temptation of messianic dominion over all the kingdoms of the world, and of accomplishing in a moment of time all for which the incense of the one sacrifice on Calvary is still rising up on the altar of God."

Edersheim, in his Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, accepts the narrative as an outward event describing Satan's assault against the Messiah. The temptations that Satan proposed concern the Messianic work that lies before Jesus, and upon which Jesus had been meditating during the preceding thirty-nine days. He writes: "Throughout the Gospels there is constant reference to the power of Satan in the world, as a kingdom opposed to that of God, and of which the devil is king. ... We have as much evidence for believing in a personal devil, as in a personal God. ... The narrative

suggests an outward and real event, not an inward transaction. Some of the objections raised, notably that of the impossibility of showing from one spot all the kingdoms of the world, cannot bear close investigation. For no rational interpretation would insist on the absolute literality of this statement. All the requirements of the narrative would be met by supposing Jesus to have been placed on a very high mountain whence [the surrounding country] gave far-off prospect of the kingdoms of this world. ... Shall we venture to say that such a vision was only inward, and not outwardly and objectively real? In truth we are using terms which have no application to Christ. ... It was not inward in the sense of being merely subjective, but it was all real - a real assault by a real Satan, really under these three forms, and it constituted a real temptation to Christ. .... During the preceding thirty-nine days the plan, or rather the future, of the work to which He had been consecrated, must have been always before Him. In this respect, then, He must have been tempted. ... The unchangeable convictions which He had already attained must have stood out before Him; that His Father's business was the Kingdom of God; that He was furnished to do it, not by outward weapons, but by the abiding presence of the Spirit; above all, that absolute submission to the will of God was the way to it, nay, itself the Kingdom of God. It was on these very points that the final attack of the Enemy was directed in the utmost weakness of Jesus." Weary, hungry, and alone in the desert, Jesus is tempted to despair of God. But his circumstances were God-appointed, and so Jesus submitted to the will of God by continuing in those circum-

stances. Next, if he would not despair, he is tempted to presume. But he realized that that would be failing to trust in God. Finally, he is tempted to cut short the contest with Satan, to abolish his kingdom, to set free man from his dominion, by paying homage to Satan. But he rejected the suggestion, and submits to God's will.

Cook, in The Story of Jesus,<sup>1</sup> says that it was necessary for Jesus in the redemption of the world from the power of Satan, to meet and conquer the arch-enemy of the race. On the other hand, the devil chose an opportune time, and endeavored to bring Jesus to corruption. "This account is no allegory, but an actual event. The devil is no mythical being, but a real person. There is no valid reason to doubt his visible appearance to Jesus." In the first temptation Satan challenges Jesus' claim that he is God's son, and demands proof. In the second, he asks Jesus to perform a miracle in order to prove his Messiahship, and thereby be received as the Son of God. Finally, he offers him the kingdoms of the world, on condition that he pay him homage.

I have placed the above interpretations in one category because, although no two of them are identical, they do apparently agree in considering the story an outward, visible, audible, conflict between Jesus and the devil, in which Jesus is victorious. The content of the temptations is of secondary importance. Satan merely selected these three approaches be-

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1 PP. 91ff.



cause he thought they would be most effective; but other suggestions would have been equally appropriate. The devil knew whom he was tempting, and Jesus recognized the person of the tempter. These writers have accepted the story literally and naïvely, reading into it a minimum of their own interpretation or explanation.

2. As undertaken by Jesus to fulfil prophecy.

Jerome: Letters, Numbers 130, 3, and 22

Irenaeus: Against Heresies, Book IV, Ch. 5:6

Ibid., Book V, Ch. 21:2.

These two writers also accepted the story as a literal, outward fact; but they interpreted it as being the fulfilment of the prophecy that the seed of woman would bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). Jerome writes: "The Savior of the world, who in His virtues and His mode of life has left us an example to follow, was, immediately after His baptism, taken up by the Spirit that He might contend with the devil, and after crushing him and overthrowing him might deliver him to His disciples to trample under foot. For what says the apostle? 'God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.' And yet after the Savior had fasted forty days, it was through food that the old enemy laid a snare for Him."

Irenaeus appears to have taken a similar position, for we find him writing: "Now the Lord would not have recapitulated in Himself that ancient and primary enmity against the serpent, fulfilling the promise of the Creator, and performing His command, if He had come from another Father."



But as He is one and the same, who formed us at the beginning, and sent His son at the end, the Lord did perform His command, being made of woman, by both destroying our adversary, and perfecting man after the image and likeness of God. And for this reason He did not draw the means of confounding him from any other source than from the words of the law, and made use of the Father's commandment as a help toward the destruction and confusion of the apostate angel."

It has, indeed, been common to find expressed the idea that the temptation incident is the fulfilment of the prophecy in Genesis, and a number of commentators throughout the centuries have accepted this interpretation. I shall discuss many of these writers elsewhere, but I have included only Irenaeus and Jerome in this section inasmuch as this explanation is the outstanding characteristic of the interpretation which they offer.

### 3. As undertaken for the instruction of believers

St. Chrysostom: Homily on Matthew 4:1.

In an eloquent and vivid exposition Chrysostom presents the view that Jesus endured the temptation for the purpose of instructing Christians how to conduct themselves in similar circumstances. He declares that Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted, "after the descent of the Spirit, after the voice that was borne from above, and

said, This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; and what was marvellous, it was of the Holy Spirit. For since with a view to our instruction He both did and underwent all things, He endured also to be led up thither, and to wrestle against the devil, in order that each of those who are baptized, if, after his baptism he have to endure greater temptations, may not be troubled as if the result were unexpected, but may continue to endure all nobly, as though it were happening in the natural course of things." He says that the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, where he fasted, and "minded to attract the devil, gives him a handle not only by His hunger, but also by the place. For then most especially doth the devil assail, when he sees men left alone and by themselves." Then he describes how the devil approached Jesus with the suggestion that he turn stones into bread. "He said not, because Thou art hungered, but if Thou be Son of God; thinking to cheat Him with his compliments. Wherefore, also, he was silent touching the hunger, that he might not seem to be alleging it, and upbraiding Him. For not knowing the greatness of the Economy which was going on, he supposed this to be a reproach to Him." But to the devil's suggestion Jesus replied, "Man shall not live by bread alone." Chrysostom continues: "So that He begins with the necessity of the belly ... to show that the virtuous man is not compelled even by this tyranny to do anything that is unseemly, teaching us to obey the devil in nothing." Then the devil, "because Christ had reasoned with him from Scripture, also

brings in a testimony of the prophet," suggesting that he cast himself from the temple, in order to test his consciousness of Sonship, and insinuating that "in vain God hath called Thee Son, and hath beguiled Thee by His gift." But Jesus "is not indignant, nor provoked, but with extreme gentleness He reasons with him again from the Scriptures, saying, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God, teaching us that we must overcome the devil, not by miracles, but by forbearance and long suffering, and that we should do nothing at all for display and vainglory. .... But Christ, even when these things were said, doth not yet reveal Himself, but as man for a while discourses with him." Then, "as pugilists, when they have received deadly blows, reel about, drenched in blood, and blinded, even so he too, darkened by the first and the second blow, speaks at random what comes uppermost, and proceeds to his third assault" offering Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. "For since he was now come to sinning against the Father, saying that all that is the Father's was his, and was endeavoring to make himself out to be God, as artificer of the universe, He then rebuked him; but not even then with vehemence, but simply, Get thee hence, Satan; which, in itself, had in it something of command rather than rebuke. ... The things that form the substance of innumerable evils are these; to be a slave to the belly, to do anything for vainglory, to be in subjection to the madness of riches, which, accordingly, that accursed one considering, set last the most powerful of all, I mean the desire for more; and though originally, and from the be-



ginning , he was travailing to come to this, yet he kept it for the last, as being of more force than the rest. .... How, then, are we to get the better of him? In the way which Christ has taught us, by fleeing to God for refuge."

4. As undertaken by the devil in order to learn who Jesus was.

St. Ephrem the Syrian: Rhythm the Seventh, Sec.3  
Rhythm the Thirtieth,  
 Sec. 4.

According to Chrysostom, the devil did not know whom he was tempting. Jesus had assumed human nature, and the devil, therefore, presumed that he was tempting an ordinary man. "For Christ", says he, "even when these things are said, doth not yet reveal Himself, but as man for a while discourses with him."<sup>1</sup> To a great many commentators, both Jesus and the devil recognized each other; but to others, this was not the case. We find the idea that the devil suspected Jesus' divinity, that he was entirely ignorant of it, or that he was eager to test his power. Again, we find the view expressed that Jesus, too, did not realize that he was dealing with any other than a human being, or that he saw through the devil's disguise but pretended not to know him, or that after the first or second temptation Jesus discerned the nature of his opponent.

St. Ephrem understood the temptation as the devil's effort to discover who Jesus was. Says he, "Satan tempted

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit.



Jesus, wishing to know who He was." And again, "He put on humility in His temptation, The abyss and the waves of His wisdom He veiled and concealed though questioned. Scriptures which were to us of small account did He cite to the serpent, and lamed him and stopped his disputing and questioning." In the following section we shall see that Leo the Great, John Cassian, and Augustine also had the idea that the devil sought to know who Jesus was; but their interpretation differs sufficiently from that of St. Ephrem to justify our assigning them to a category of their own.

5. As undertaken by the devil to learn who Jesus was, and endured by Jesus for our instruction.

Augustine: City of God, Book IX, Ch. 21  
Reply to Faustus the Manichaeon,  
 Book XXVI, Sec. 8.  
On the Gospel of St. John, Tractate 52  
On the Psalms, Psalm VIII  
Sermon Seventy-three, Section 2.

Leo the Great: Sermons, 39:3  
Sermons, 40:3

John Cassian: Conference of Abbot Abraham, Ch.17  
Conference of Abbot Serapion, Ch.6  
Seven Books on the Incarnation of  
the Lord, against Nestorius,  
 Book. VII, Ch. 11.

In the City of God Augustine discusses the temptations as follows: "The prince of demons doubted whether He were the Christ, and endeavored to ascertain this by tempting Him, in so far as He permitted Himself to be tempted, that He might adapt the manhood He wore to be an example for our

imitation. But after that temptation, when, as Scripture says, He was ministered to by the angels who are good and holy, and therefore objects of terror to the impure spirits, He revealed more and more distinctly to the demons how great He was, so that, even though the infirmity of His flesh might seem contemptible, none dared to resist His authority." Writing elsewhere Augustine continues: "For He thought it meet also to be tempted by the devil, by whom otherwise He would never have been tempted, just as, had He not been willing, He would never have suffered; and the answers He gave to the devil are such as thou oughtest to use in times of temptation. And He, indeed, was tempted, but not endangered, that He might show thee, when in danger through temptation, how to answer the tempter."<sup>1</sup> In commenting upon Psalm VIII, Augustine discusses the nature of the temptations which Satan employed. "Now these three kinds of vice, namely, the pleasure of the flesh, and pride, and curiosity, include all sins. ... And that temptation of the Lord Man was threefold. ... And accordingly, after the enemy could prevail by none of these temptations, this is said of him, 'When the devil had ended all his temptation'."<sup>2</sup>

A similar interpretation is found in the sermons of Leo the Great, with the exception that the devil's motive was thought to be not so much to ascertain if Jesus were the Christ, as to test the power of his adversary. "It

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1 On the Gospel of St. John, Tractate 52

2 On the Psalms.

was for this that the Lord allowed Himself to be tempted by the tempter, that we might be taught by His example, for He conquered the adversary by quotations from the law, not by actual strength, that by this very thing He might do greater honor to man, and inflict a greater punishment by conquering the enemy of the human race, not as God but as Man. He fought then, therefore, that we too might fight thereafter; He conquered that we too might likewise conquer." And again, "For whom would he not dare to try, who did not keep from his treacherous attempts even on our Lord Jesus Christ? For when our Savior, Who was true God, that He might show Himself true Man also, and banish all wicked and erroneous opinions after the fast of forty days and nights, had experienced the hunger of human weakness, the devil, rejoicing at having found in Him a sign of mortal nature, in order to test the power which he feared, said, 'If Thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.' Doubtless the Almighty could do this, and it is easy that at the Creator's command a creature of any kind should change into the form it was commanded; but here it better agreed with His purpose of salvation that His haughty foe's cunning should be vanquished by the Lord, not in the power of His Godhead, but by the mystery of His humiliation. ... At length, when the devil had been put to flight and the tempter baffled in all his arts, angels came to the Lord and ministered to Him, that He being true Man and true God, His manhood might be unsullied by those crafty questions, and



His Godhead displayed by those holy ministrations."

John Cassian believed that the devil was moved by certain signs (presumably those associated with the birth and baptism of Jesus) to attempt to discover if this person were the Son of God; that he approached him in the same manner in which he approached Adam; and that Christ permitted the temptation in order to furnish an example to his followers. Writing against Nestorius, he says: "It was by mighty evidence of signs that he was moved to suspect and examine into this matter. ... He had no doubt about the possibility of it, but ... his anxiety was about the truth of it." In his Conference with Abbot Abraham, he describes the nature of the three temptations, showing that the first was directed against "that portion of the mind which is subject to desire," the second against the reasonable part, and the third against "that part subject to wrath, when he tried to incite Him to seek the power of the present life and the kingdoms of the world." However, in his Conference with Abbot Serapion, he gives a different interpretation to the temptations, in the attempt to show wherein they were analogous to those that caused the fall of Adam. He says that Jesus was tempted "through those passions, through which Adam was also tempted, that is, through gluttony, vainglory, and pride. ... For it was gluttony through which he took the fruit of the forbidden tree, vainglory through which it was said, 'Your eyes shall be opened,' and pride through which it was said, 'Ye shall be as gods.' With



these three sins, then, we read that our Savior was also tempted, in order that He might by His example teach us how we ought to vanquish the tempter."

B. Between Jesus and the devil in disguise.

John Milton: Paradise Regained

F.W.Farrar: The Life of Christ (1874)

John Wesley: Notes on the New Testament

James Bennett: Lectures on the History of Jesus Christ  
(1825)

W. R. Nicoll: The Incarnate Savior (1882)

Howard Crosby: Jesus, His Life and Work (1871)

J. P. Lange: The Gospel according to Matthew  
(English translation 1870)

K. H. Venturini: Natürliche Geschichte des Grossen  
Propheten von Nazareth (1800)

There were certain difficulties which persons felt in connection with the literal interpretations of the story. For instance, how could the devil have hoped to succeed against Jesus if he appeared in person? Would not Jesus have seen immediately into the diabolical nature of the suggestions, and have rejected them without giving them a thought? If he knew who was tempting him, would he not have considered the temptation to worship his tempter as preposterous? Could this have been a real temptation for him at all, had he known the source of the suggestions? Could we say that he was tempted in all points like as we are, if he were tempted by the devil in person, while we are spared such experiences? Problems of this nature gave rise to the theory that the devil must have appeared in disguise, for one, if not for all, of the temptations. Those whom we have included in

the present section would agree with those critics whom we have already discussed in accepting the account as a literal, audible, transaction; the difference being simply that they believe that the devil appeared in something other than his orthodox guise.

Milton makes the temptation, and the victory, of Jesus the basis for Paradise Regained.

"I, who erewhile the happy garden sung,  
By one man's disobedience lost, now sing  
Recovered Paradise to all mankind,  
By one man's firm obedience fully tried  
Through all temptation, defeated and repulsed,  
And Eden raised in the waste wilderness."

Beginning with the account of the baptism, he describes how Jesus, unmarked and unknown, came with great crowds to the Jordan. But John, divinely warned, recognized and pronounced him as his superior, and this testimony was soon confirmed by the voice from heaven. Satan was surprised and overwhelmed with this pronouncement.

"That heard the adversary, who, roving still  
About the world, at that assembly famed  
Would not be last; and with the voice divine  
Nigh thunder-struck, the exalted Man, to whom  
Such high attest was given, a while surveyed  
With wonder; then, with envy fraught and rage,  
Flies to his place, nor rests, but in mid air  
To council summons all his mighty peers."

He tells them of his fears that Jesus is that seed of the woman destined to destroy their power, and shows the necessity of defeating him. In the meantime God announces to the angels that He was given over Jesus to be tempted in order to prove

that He can "produce a man  
Of female seed, far abler to resist  
All his solicitations, and at length  
All his vast force, and drive him back to Hell,  
Winning by conquest what the first man lost  
By fallacy surprised."

When Jesus had fasted forty days, and was hungry, the devil approached him in the form of

"an aged man in rural weeds,  
Following, as seemed, the quest of some stray ewe,  
Or withered sticks to gather, which might serve  
Against a winter's day when winds blow keen,  
To warm him wet returned from field at eve."

The old peasant, stating that he recognizes Jesus as the Son of God, having been present at the baptism, suggests that he use his power "that out of these hard stones be made thee bread," and "so shalt thou save thyself and us relieve with food, whereof we wretched seldom taste."

Jesus, however, seeing through the disguise of his tempter, refuses to comply with the request, and Satan disappears.

He does not give up hope, however, of using Jesus' hunger as a means of winning him. The following day he prepares a "table richly spread, in regal mode", and comes to Jesus as a man, "not rustic as before, but seemlier clad, as one in city, or court, or palace bred," and invites him to partake of the meal. But again he fails to corrupt Jesus. Then he continues his efforts immediately by pointing out to Jesus that he,

"unknown, unfriended, low of birth,"  
cannot hope to achieve great things without wealth; and this the devil offers him. Jesus replies by showing the needlessness and danger of riches. Then the devil seeks to awaken in him a passion for glory, but Jesus points out the folly of this. In vain Satan tries to corrupt Christ by appealing to his right to the throne of David. Next he con-



ducts him to the top of a high mountain, "for such power was given him then", and shows him all the kingdoms of the world, and offers them to him on condition that he fall down and worship him. To this Jesus replies:

"I never liked thy talk, thy offers less,  
Now both abhor, since thou hast dared to utter  
The abominable terms, impious condition."

Thereupon the devil

"caught him up, and, without wing  
Of hippogriff, bore through the air sublime  
Over the wilderness and o'er the plain:  
Till underneath them fair Jerusalem,  
The holy city, lifted high her towers,  
And higher yet the glorious temple reared  
Her pile, far off appearing like a mount  
Of alabaster, topped with golden spires:  
There on the highest pinnacle he set  
The Son of God,"

and required him to prove his divinity either by standing there, or by casting himself down with safety.

"To whom thus Jesus: 'Also it is written,  
Tempt not the Lord thy God,' he said and stood:  
But Satan, smitten with amazement, fell."

Whereupon a body of angels flew down,

"who on their plummy vans received him soft  
From his uneasy station, and upbore,  
As on a floating couch, through the blithe air.  
Then in a flowery valley set him down  
On a green bank, and set before him spread  
A table of celestial food."

Others have followed Milton in the belief that the devil approached Jesus in the form of a human being. John Wesley, in his Notes on the New Testament, seems to look upon the temptation as a combat between Jesus and the devil, in which the devil attempts to overthrow the Messiah, and place him under his power. He says that Jesus was tempted



throughout the forty days, during which time the devil was invisible; but at the end of this time he appeared in a visible form, probably in human shape, "as one that desired to inquire farther into the evidence" of Jesus' being the Messiah. He asks him to turn stones into bread, thus proving it; but Jesus refuses. Then he takes him to Jerusalem, and to the pinnacle of the temple, and asks him to establish his Messiahship and to show his confidence in God by casting himself down. But Jesus would not require "farther evidence of what he hath sufficiently made plain." Then the devil, no longer hiding behind his human guise, shows Jesus the kingdoms of the world, "in a kind of visionary representation," and offers them to him, untruthfully claiming them as his own. "Accordingly, Christ answering this suggestion calls him by his own name, which he had not done before," and commands Satan to get behind him, "into his proper place." Then the angels came to supply him with food, and to congratulate him upon his victory.

Milton, it will be remembered, indicates that the devil's scheme in assuming human form was not at all successful, inasmuch as Jesus' immediately saw through it. Howard Crosby, on the contrary, maintains that the devil was disguised as a holy man, and that Jesus did not recognize him at all. He says that after the baptism Jesus sought the depths of the Sinai desert, and for forty days he fasted and was tempted by Satan. "But while the entire forty days had this character, we are only admitted to a particular view of the last vain attempts of the arch-fiend. In these three instances Satan

appears to Jesus in form, probably as a holy man, (the whole style of the dialogue demands this), who had been waiting for the Coming One, saluting Jesus with a gracious greeting, to throw him off his guard. He hails him as the Son of God, the Messiah, to the full consciousness of which office Jesus had now reached, and begs him, as holding this sublime position, to use his power in satisfying his great hunger by turning the stones about him into bread. These are words of kind concern apparently. The new companion is touched with interest in the condition of Jesus, and would suggest an immediate relief to his suffering. ... As a friend and well-wisher he accompanies Jesus on his journey back from the desert, and establishes relations of intimacy and confidence on the lengthy way to Jerusalem. On arriving at the holy city, the two proceed to the temple, and mount to the roof of the long portico. As they gaze from this lofty out-look, his companion again seizes the opportunity, after so long an interval from the last, and proposes his leap from the giddy height. It would establish his Messiahship in the minds and hearts of all the crowds who thronged that promenade. It would be a fitting beginning to his career. .... He continues with Jesus as his companion down to the Jordan valley, and crosses the river with him. He induces him to ascend one of the high Peraean mountains. Perhaps he suggested a season of prayer on that mountain-top as appropriate before again mingling with his friends and countrymen. ... Now the tempter throws off his mask. In his zeal he loses his prudence. He uses his

mighty power as a prince of the power of the air, and whether by refraction or other methods beyond the knowledge of man, causes all the great kingdoms of the world to appear before Jesus, and promises all to Jesus if he will only fall down and do him homage. In an instant Jesus understands the true character of his professed friend. ... The plan which Satan had adopted for deceiving Jesus by personal approach in human form had utterly failed, and he withdrew for the present from active assault upon the Messiah's integrity, to prepare new plans or wait for new opportunities."

James Bennett, in his Lectures on the History of Jesus Christ, thinks that Satan first appeared as a human being, travelling through the desert, but later changed his disguise to that of a "superior being - an angel of light." The devil came to Jesus first, pretending to be one who had been present at the baptism and had heard the voice from heaven. He is surprised to find this same person starving among the wild beasts, and wonders as to the meaning of it. The first temptation is to doubt and distrust, and to the employment of undue means for relief. "He so constructed the temptation, that whether Christ complied or refused, it seemed that he must be vanquished. ... But Christ so answers that the dilemma is met on both sides." The second temptation/<sup>is</sup>to presumption, the opposite of the former. Satan really desired to destroy Jesus, and would have himself hurled him down from the pinnacle, had he but dared. For the third temptation Satan changed his disguise for that of "a superior being, such as men have often been seduced to



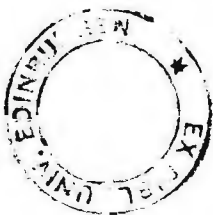
worship." He pretended to admire Jesus for his victory over the former tempter, and said that he would like to reward him by giving him an universal empire, "on the easy terms of owning that he received it from the hands of this glorious being, that now appeared before him." But, "plucking the mask from the foe, who had assumed his fairest form to do his foulest deed, Jesus flung it away, and, having lifted up his heel, stamped upon the serpent."

In The Incarnate Savior, Nicoll holds that for the last temptation the devil must have arrayed himself as "an angel of light." For the other two he does not, apparently, assume any special guise. He states that the temptation was due to the activity of a personal devil, and that they came to Jesus from without, and not from within. In the first instance, the devil urges him to use his power to satisfy his hunger, but Jesus refuses as that would have indicated a want of trust in God, and would have separated him from the lot of the human race with which he had identified himself. The second is a temptation to presumption. The third was "the worst of all." Satan, arrayed "like an angel of light, stood in his majesty beside the worn and weary Christ." The kingdoms of the world were offered to Jesus. "We do not understand this temptation if we suppose that Christ was attracted by the outward glitter and show. He saw from the mountain the misery of the world. ... And now he says to Christ, 'If thou wilt worship me, thou shalt have the rule. Thou shalt stanch the wounds, dry all tears, heal all suffering, repair what I have done so much to waste

and ruin.' Christ sought this dominion. But instead of the sorrowful way of the cross, a new road that would bring him instantly to the end is pointed out. But for Christ the way to kingdom lay through a deep valley. The shortest way to the kingdom is not the best."

Akin to these theories are those of Venturini and of Lange. Venturini suggests that the temptations were due to the machinations of the Pharisee Zadok, who pretended to enter into the plans of Jesus, and to admire him, in order to seduce him. Lange expresses the view that "Satan employed some of the chief priests and scribes as his instruments to tempt Christ to undertake the part of a worldly Messiah as the Jews at the time expected. The whole history of this temptation Jesus afterward communicated to his disciples in the form of a real narrative, clothed in symbolical language."

Finally, Farrar, in his Life of Christ, suggests several forms which the devil might have assumed, but does not commit himself to any of them. "And then it was that the tempter came; in what form - whether as a spirit of darkness, or as an angel of light, whether under the disguise of a human aspect or as an immaterial suggestion, we do not know and cannot pretend to say - content to follow simply the Gospel narrative."



C. Between Jesus and the devil as a spirit.

Jeremy Taylor: The Life of Our Blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (1834)

Zachary Eddy: Immanuel (1868)

R. C. Trench: Studies in the Gospels (1870)

If the appearance of the devil in person involved difficulties, the attempts to meet them by assuming that he came in disguise do not solve them. On the other hand, it would not be orthodox to assume that the temptations arose in the mind of Jesus. Consequently, there have come forth scholars who maintain that the temptations came to Jesus from without, that they took place exactly as described by the evangelists, but that the devil approached in the form of a spirit.

Jeremy Taylor says: "Whether the devils appeared in any horrid and affrighting shapes is not certain; but it is more likely to a person of so great sanctity and high designation, they would appear more angelical and immaterial, in representments intellectual, in words and ideas, temptations and enticements, because Jesus was not a person of those low weaknesses to be affrighted or troubled with an ugly phantasm, which can do nothing but abuse the weak and imperfect conceptions of persons nothing extraordinary." He believes that as soon as Jesus was pronounced the Son of God, the devil thought it of great concern that he should tempt him; but he could not do so until God gave him permission, for "it is the mercy of God that we have the quietness of a minute, for if the devil's chain were taken off, he would make our very beds a torment." The first temptation "was upon the instances and first necessities of nature. ...



Next he tempts him to presumption and indiscreet confidence. ... By this time the devil began to perceive that this was the Son of God, and therefore resolved<sup>2</sup> to proffer him the kingdoms of the world, thinking ambition more likely to ruin him." And so Taylor observes that poverty, presumption, and ambition are the three quivers, from which the devil drew his arrows, which, as the most likely to prevail, he shot against Christ.

Zachary Eddy thinks that the temptations revolve about the Messianic consciousness of Jesus, and the supernatural powers that were his, but that they came to him from the personal power of evil. He says that those who do not believe in a personal devil cannot understand the narrative, but "fall into manifest absurdities" when they begin explaining. It is the purpose of the devil to extend and perpetuate moral evil, and to maintain warfare against truth, order, and holiness. The mission of Christ was to destroy the works of the devil. To do this it was necessary that he become incarnate, that he be tried, that he do battle with wicked spirits, and that he overcome where the first Adam had been overcome. Eddy suggests that the tempter came "not in a visible, bodily form, but by a suggestion which Jesus at once recognized as from a spiritual intelligence. Doubtless, too, He saw the adversary, as spirits see each other; for among His spiritual powers, the vision which penetrated the spiritual world was not wanting." After the baptism, Jesus, meditating upon his future work, wandered into the desert, and continued forty days without thought

of nourishment. At this critical moment the tempter approached, suspecting, but without positively knowing, that this is the Son of God, and tried to induce Jesus to prove his Sonship by working a miracle to satisfy his hunger. But Jesus refused, realizing that his miraculous powers were given to him, not for the satisfaction of his own appetite, but for the service of others. Then Satan conducted him to Jerusalem, "by a powerful impulse, to which Jesus voluntarily yielded." Again an appeal was directed upon his miraculous powers, Jesus being urged to test his Sonship, and at the same time to establish his claims to the Messiahship, by leaping from the temple. But Jesus would not enter upon his work by appealing to the superstitious wonder of the multitudes, nor by a rash and premature action. Finally, Satan offered him the kingdoms of the world, a worldly kingdom, and begged him to set up such a kingdom as the Jews were longing for. But Jesus would not give himself to the establishment of a secular monarchy.

## Chapter III

## The Temptation as a Dream or a Vision

## A. As a vision.

E. de Presseensé: Jesus Christ (1865)

Hugh Farmer: An Inquiry into the Nature and Design of Christ's Temptation in the Wilderness (1761)

W. J. Dawson: The Life of Christ (1901)

John Calvin: Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists.

We have seen that a literal interpretation of the story was fraught with difficulties - how the devil could hope for success when Jesus knew the source of his temptations, why Jesus would travel in company with Satan, how it could be true that Jesus was tempted like ourselves if he were confronted by a visible devil. Accordingly, in order to meet such problems, it was proposed that the adversary must have come in the form of a man, or of a good angel, or of some superior being.

But there are other difficulties that beset the literal acceptance of the narrative. It would require a vivid, and uncritical, imagination to conceive of Jesus and Satan sailing through the air to the pinnacle of the temple. To many, the possibility of one's seeing the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them from a mountain top offers an insurmountable problem. Others could not understand why the devil should have been given the power to convey or conduct Jesus from place to place. These and other similar considerations called for further interpretations; and a number of writers have therefore assumed that the temptations were a real experience, but that they came as a vision or a dream.



John Calvin, apparently, had no difficulty in accepting the first temptation literally; but when it came to Christ's being conveyed to the pinnacle of the temple, and to his beholding the kingdoms of the world from the top of a mountain, Calvin resorted to the theory that the devil must have produced these effects by means of a vision. Realizing that such an explanation might be unworthy of Jesus, in that it supposes that Jesus was liable to the delusions of Satan, Calvin interjects that the vision took place "by the permission of God and the voluntary subjection of Christ." In fact, the whole temptation experience, along with the details of it, was designed by God, and was endured by Christ that by his victory he might obtain triumph for us. In his first attempt, Satan made a direct attack upon the faith of Jesus, hoping that, after destroying his faith, he would drive him to adopt wicked and unlawful means of procuring food. He suggests that Jesus has been forsaken by God, and should therefore provide for himself the food which God has failed to supply. In the suggestion that he leap from the temple, Satan urges him to indulge a foolish and vain confidence, to make a trial of his divinity. Jesus' reply implies that it is wrong and unfair to make an experiment of divine power, when there is no necessity for it. Finally, there is the temptation that "Christ should seek, in another manner than from God, the inheritance which He has promised to His children."

E. de Pressensé believes that Satan, by means of a vision, presented to Jesus the popular Messianic ideal.

This was a real experience, and a real temptation, and Jesus had to choose between two conflicting ideals; but the whole transaction transpired in a vision. He says, "There is no difficulty in supposing visions which in no way suspend moral action." Jesus is tempted as the Messiah, and the attack is directed at his miraculous powers. Such power, employed for selfish and personal ends, might serve to provide all material goods for the Messiah and for his people, who would receive him with open arms. It might become the means of dazzling men through strange signs and miracles. "Nothing could be easier than to obtain by its means power and an earthly kingdom, for no throne would be exalted enough for a Messiah, who would multiply marvels and make plenty and riches spring up beneath his feet"

Hugh Farmer criticizes the views that Christ's temptation was an outward transaction, or a vision produced by Satan; and concludes that, if it were neither of these, it must have been a divine vision. He bases his position upon "the express letter of the text in the three evangelists, and from several circumstances in the narrative." He holds that Matthew's words, that Jesus was "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness", can be understood properly only in the sense that they refer to a divine vision. Jesus could not have been conducted into the wilderness inasmuch as he was already there. The Spirit could be no other than the Spirit of God, with which he was filled at

baptism. The Spirit, he explains, often expresses prophetic illumination, a divine agency on the mind revealing new truths to it, or making some discovery of the will of God. The expressions used by Mark and Luke also confirm this hypothesis. He continues: "His temptation by the devil, all the parts of it, as well as the several proposals which the devil made to Christ, as the different scenes and objects he presented to him, and his carrying him to the summit of the Jewish temple, and from thence to a high mountain; all the parts of this transaction were merely ideal and visionary. They were the subject matter of Christ's vision, or of that symbolical and emblematical revelation which was now made to Christ by the Spirit. Never would interpreters have construed that as a history of outward occurrences, which was manifestly intended as a description of a vision, had they considered that by Christ's being brought into a wilderness in or by the Spirit, we are to understand his being conveyed there by prophetic inspiration, which was by vision, as distinct from every other species of revelation. For if he was carried into the wilderness in vision, that he might be tempted by the devil, and was so tempted during his vision, then every thing that occurs concerning his temptation by the devil was a visionary representation. .... It would not therefore be more unreasonable to construe the prophetic visions of Ezekiel and St. John as relations of a series of outward occurrences than it is to put the like construction upon this vision of Christ, since both are introduced in the same manner,



that is, with the express declaration to the contrary."

Regarding the purpose and significance of the vision, he holds that God designed it as a prediction, in symbolical form, of the particular difficulties which Christ would meet with in the execution of his Messianic work, and in the employment of his power of working miracles. In the first temptation, the "great adversary of all mankind seemed to approach our Redeemer" and suggested that he turn stones into bread in order to satisfy his hunger. In this vision God was instructing Jesus that, although he was the Son of God, he was to meet hardships and hunger and thirst and all other difficulties like the lowest of the sons of man, and that he must never use his powers for his own personal relief. The purpose of the second temptation was "to shew that he was not to expose his person to danger without necessity, from a confidence in the divine protection; and that he was to avoid an ostentatious display of his divine powers, without suffering others to prescribe to him what miracles should be wrought for their conviction."

Finally, he is tempted to worship Satan, with the promise that he would be given the kingdoms of the world. This is to be "considered as a presignification and warning of the like temptation, to which he was to be exposed, in the course of his future ministry; during which he was called upon to prostitute himself, with all his miraculous endowments, to the service of Satan, for the sake of worldly honours. The Jewish nation expected their Messiah to deliver them from the yoke of servitude, to raise it to a pitch of

grandeur superior to what they had enjoyed under their greatest monarchs, and to extend their conquests over all the heathen nations to the very ends of the earth." Jesus is thus warned in advance that when the Jews become solicitous that he fulfil their expectations and satisfy their ambitions, he must beware of the temptation.

The author of this interpretation feels that his explanation "obviates all the objections made to the common interpretations, and justifies the wisdom of God in this dispensation; it exalts the character of Christ, and confirms our faith in his divine mission; and it affords ample consolation and instruction to his disciples under those manifold and great temptations with which they may be called out to struggle."

Another type of vision is that proposed by Dawson in his Life of Christ, namely, that it was produced upon the imagination and sensitive nature of Jesus by his environment and circumstances - the solitude, the desolation of the desert, the noise of the wind, and the cries of the wild beasts. What this interpretation lacks in illumination, it certainly compensates for in ingenuity and fancy. As to the purpose and significance of the experience, the author suggests that Jesus was making an experiment to determine the value of asceticism, such as John practiced, and that in this sojourn he discovered its shortcomings. "Following instantly as it does on Christ's contact with John, it can hardly be doubted that the sojourn in the desert was one of the results of that association. Perhaps it was undertaken at the immediate sug-

gestion of John; perhaps it was a concession on the part of Jesus to the prevalent ideals of the time. Jesus saw in John a truly great man, whose greatness had been bred in the school of austerity, and he himself would fain make a trial of asceticism. ... It is by no means surprising that Jesus should have fallen for a time under the spell of John's asceticism. There is something deeply impressive in the ascetic character. ... The story of the temptation, read in the light of John's asceticism becomes easily intelligible. The analogy of the sensitive child in the dark may fairly indicate what Jesus suffered in this strange experiment. All his life accustomed to the gently rounded hills of Nazareth, the charm and sweetness of fertile landscape, Jesus was now suddenly thrust into a land absolutely desolate. ... He had lived all his life among kinsfolk and friends, and now he is utterly alone. ... The cry of the wind or of the wild beasts thrills the nerves. The immitigable silence is itself a horror. .. Hunger gives a new poignancy to all mental and physical sensations. ... Stirrings of the air, scarce noticeable by the normal sense, fall upon the spirit like a blow. ... Strange pictures run like a frieze of fire upon that darkness, till at last from its chaotic tumult the form of the Evil One himself coheres, emerges, and approaches. In a scene where all is monstrous and deformed, under a strain of mind and body quite unfamiliar and abnormal, the tortured imagination falls a prey to all the horror of diabolism, at last projecting on the air the



very shape of the enemy of souls himself. Such is the work of asceticism upon a nature eminently social, joyous, and sensitive. The temptation is not the less real because we may thus explain it as the effect of asceticism upon a peculiarly sensitive imagination."

First there comes to Jesus the temptation to break the vow of abstinence by creating bread to satisfy his hunger; and his reply is remarkable as an assertion of the right of the spirit to control the body. Next he is prompted to make a selfish use of his miraculous power, or to abuse his faith, making a leap from the temple in order to test God's promise of protection. The author admits that there is something childish and cynical in this suggestion, "unless it be meant to imply that derangement of reason which struggles with the gloomy horror of suicide." But the reply of Christ "breathes the spirit of temperate wisdom." Finally the impulse comes to snatch at power by a sacrifice of conscience, but this is "a seduction that has no potency for the pious idealist." And so it was that Jesus discovered that John's was an abnormal life, though it had many virtues, and it was incapable of general imitation. He came to realize that the redemption of men must be wrought through the normal, not the abnormal. Consequently, he did not return to John, nor did he seek further instruction from him. "Asceticism had been tried and found wanting."

## B. As a dream.

H.E.G. Paulus: Das Leben Jesu (1828)

Lindsay Dewar: "Our Lord's Temptation", in  
Theology, Vol. XVI, No. 92 (1928).

Paulus accepts the temptation as a dream, although his distinction between a dream and a vision seems to be rather indefinite. He believes that in this dream experience Jesus was confronted with certain problems pertaining to the office of Messiah, and that he accepted some and rejected others. He is confronted with the question of whether or not he should expect God to provide miraculously for his needs and comforts; and determines that not even the Messiah has a right to expect this of God. Then he is disturbed with the thought of a perverted, presumptuous, trust in God; but he realizes that it is wrong to test or challenge God, where intelligence and common sense direct otherwise. Finally, he is tempted by the thought that he, as Messiah, should aim at the sovereignty of the world, and is confronted with the problem of what would be the quickest way. Is it not legitimate to force people, and use base means, in order to establish the kingdom of God upon earth? Does not the worthy cause make holy the means? Jesus decides against such an idea. The fact that his convictions and conclusions were true and satisfying is indicated by the fact that he dreamed that angels hovered over him ready to serve him.

Exactly a century later another dream theory was proposed. It is the belief of the author, Dewar, that human

temptation arises from a conflict between conscience and instinct, and we can understand Christ's temptations only by keeping this fact in mind. He says: "In these stories we are dealing with a dream experience of Jesus. We do not mean that we are dealing solely with our Lord's dreams, for all day long these temptations were present and he was wrestling with them. But in the silent hours of the night they clothed themselves in vivid imagery, and in this form they have been handed on by him to us." The first temptation represents the conflict between conscience and the instinct of hunger. Perhaps to satisfy his hunger it would have been necessary for Jesus to run away from the wilderness back into the world. "In waking life so great was his devotion to his mission that he would scarcely be conscious of his hunger; i.e., he had sublimated the instinct of hunger to such an extent that he rose above it." The second temptation, using Luke's order, to fall down and worship Satan in order to gain possession of the world, is a conflict between conscience and the instinct of self-assertion. "He is tempted to seek to acquire power - either spiritual, or temporal, or both - but he perceives that to yield to this impulse is to be guilty of idolatry." The temptation to leap from the pinnacle of the temple is symbolical of the conflict between conscience and the instinct of flight - not, however, flight from his difficulties, so much as flight over them. "Here is where the question of his Messiahship enters. What kind of Messiah was he to be? His ideal was a suffering Messiah, and he is



tempted to abandon this ideal. Perhaps he is tempted to fly from his difficulties by living as an orthodox Jewish Messiah. In any case, he is struggling with the instinct of flight, which is the converse of the second temptation, in which he was combating the instinct of self-assertion. .... Thus we see in the temptations a picture of Humanity for the first time wrestling with its instincts and subduing them."

## Chapter IV

## The Temptation Story as a Myth

In the two preceding chapters we have considered those critics who have been most orthodox in their treatment of the temptation story. With the possible exception of Dawson, the tendency has been, up to this point, to take the narrative just as it is recorded, or at least with only such additions and changes as were demanded by rather simple standards of possibility and probability. In the nineteenth century, however, the sceptical lives of Jesus began to appear; and the temptation narrative came in for its share of doubt and criticism. It was declared to be entirely mythical or perhaps an elaboration of some insignificant historical incident, or a misunderstood parable of Jesus, or as a product of the imagination of one of the early biographers. Let us glance at some of these interpretations, taking them in a logical, and not a chronological, order.

## A. With an historic basis.

E. Renan: La Vie de Jésus (1863)

Nathaniel Schmidt: The Prophet of Nazareth (1905)

G. L. Cary: The Synoptic Gospels

These biographers agree that the story as found in Matthew and Luke is not historical, but think that the myth might have developed out of the fact that Jesus retired into the wilderness for a period of time following his baptism. Schmidt, for example, thinks that perhaps Jesus sought the solitude of the desert for the purpose of meditation, and his residence for some time was unknown to his relatives

and remained so for his disciples. The order of the temptations that came to him is found to be different in Matthew, Luke, and the Gospel according to the Hebrews; but Schmidt thinks that there is no reason to believe that Jesus was seriously troubled by such desires. He suggests that the original impulse to such narratives may have been the saying of Jesus recorded in Luke 22:28. The three temptations, as a matter of fact, were pivotal thoughts with Jesus, and they do typify the sort of temptations supposed to assail the Messiah. But it is unnecessary and unreasonable to believe that Jesus passed through a period of struggle, immediately following the baptism, as the gospels record.

Renan gives a slightly different view. He believes that Jesus spent some time alone in the desert before making his public appearance, because such a period of retirement in the Judæan wilderness was generally looked upon as the proper preparation for great deeds. His disciples became concerned about him during his absence, and allowed their imaginations to suggest what took place. In the popular belief, the desert was the abode of demons; and the conclusion drawn was that during this period an attempt had been made by the devil to terrify him, and seduce him with great promises. Jesus, however, prevailed; and angels came and rewarded him for his victory.

Strauss, too, as we shall presently see, admits that it was Jesus' habit to retire to solitary places for meditation and prayer, and that such a retirement after his baptism



is perhaps the basis for the narrative; but this he accepts as a bare possibility, and not as the best explanation of the story.

B. As a parable.

Friedrich Schleiermacher: Das Leben Jesu (1864)

Carl Hase: Life of Jesus (Eng. tr. 1860)

J. Weiss: Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments  
(1906)

According to Schleiermacher, the temptations recorded in the gospels, if taken as historic fact, would be unworthy of, and derogatory to, the character of Jesus; or they could have had no meaning for him, nor made any appeal to him. But in order to explain the presence of the story in the records of Jesus, he proposes what he considers to be the least objectionable hypothesis, namely, that the narrative is a parable told by Jesus, which was later taken as a fact of history. In this parable Jesus was warning his disciples against dangers that would inevitably beset them, and was instructing them how they should order their course in the work that lay before them. They must refrain from a vain display of the miraculous powers with which they were endowed; they must beware of ambition; and they should trust God for the necessities of life.

Hase and Weiss, on the other hand, think that the narrative portrays a true inward history of Jesus' thoughts, probably put in this form of a personal experience by Jesus himself. It is not correct, however, to assign the experi-

ence to a period following the baptism, as the evangelists do. Hase says that it is possible that Jesus, following the example of his spiritual precursors, withdrew into the desert in order, on the eve of his great enterprise, to meditate once more on the course of his life; and this circumstance would have given his disciples an occasion for individualizing this general fact. Both Hase and Weiss, however, seem inclined to view the temptation as a long circle of inward experiences and problems, which Jesus communicated to his disciples in this instructive and picturesque form. Weiss believes that the story reflects certain problems of his Messiahship, which Jesus met throughout his ministry. Hase says that Jesus had to fight a battle with the attractions of the world. The temptations are those which beset humanity everywhere, but which belong especially to great men, and, therefore, most especially to Jesus. The lower earthly impulses - the love of fame, of comfort, of power - were indeed never accepted by the will of Jesus as motives, nor became fixed as sinful desires; but were brought before his mind by the necessary influences which the common habits of thought exercise on the imagination. In this respect, then, they might be represented as outward temptations.

Objections might be raised against our placing the interpretations of Hase and Weiss in the category of the mythical explanations. They really combine the views of an underlying historical truth, the form of a parable,

and the mythical tradition. But if we take the position that the temptation story as recorded in the gospels, immediately following the baptism, was an actual fact in the life of Jesus, we must regard the explanations of Hase and Weiss as implying that the narrative is unhistorical, but incorporates in the form of a parable a teaching, which, as is true also of many of his other teachings, found a basis in his own experience.

#### C. As a pure myth

- D. F. Strauss: Life of Jesus (Eng.tr.1846)  
 C. J. G. Montefiore: The Synoptic Gospels (1909)  
 T. W. Doane: Bible Myths and Their Parallels in Other Religions (1883)  
 J. M. Robertson: Christianity and Mythology (1900)

Now whereas Renan, Schmidt, and others have considered Mark's brief account as the historical fact upon which a later evangelist elaborated, or that the story grew up in the effort to explain a prolonged absence of Jesus from his friends, there have been many writers who looked upon the whole account as a myth. Whether we are willing to agree with them or not, it must be admitted that their position is well taken, for there is a considerable amount of evidence that points to the legendary character of the story. It possesses a concreteness, a highly imaginative character, a number of mythical and figurative expressions, and numerous parallels in other religions and in Jewish literature, which immediately arouse the suspicions of the historian.

Among those who have taken this position, Strauss has doubtless been the most influential. It is his view that



the story developed from the following circumstances:

"Satan, the evil being and enemy of mankind, borrowed from the Persian religion, was by the Jews, whose exclusiveness limited all that was good and truly human to the Israelitish people, viewed<sup>as</sup>/ the special adversary of their nation, and hence as the lord of the heathen states with whom they were in hostility. The interests of the Jewish people being centered in the Messiah, it followed that Satan was emphatically his adversary; and thus throughout the New Testament we find the idea of Jesus as the Messiah associated with that of Satan as the enemy of his person and cause." It was originally thought that temptation was from God Himself, who thus put his favorites to test, or in anger instigated men to pernicious deeds. But with the coming of the idea of a devil, the office of temptation was transferred to him. Inasmuch as the great men of the Hebrews had been tempted, it was only natural to suppose that the Messiah, too, would be the object of his assaults. If the scene of the temptation were being considered, the wilderness would present itself as being the most reasonable spot for many reasons. Add to this the fact that it was the habit of Jesus to retire into the wilderness and solitary places for prayer. What would he do in the wilderness? He would certainly, like Moses, submit himself to the holy discipline of fasting. This idea, too, furnished a suitable introduction to the first temptation. That Jesus remained in the wilderness for forty days is to be expected; for the number forty is found throughout Hebrew antiquity,

and, also, it suggests the term of the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites. Then, during their wanderings, the Hebrews were tempted principally by hunger, and this fact determined what Jesus' first temptation would be. How many temptations should Jesus be assigned? It was believed that Abraham had ten; but that number was too large for a dramatic narrative, and among the lower numbers, three would undoubtedly be selected. The experience of the Hebrews in the wilderness also determined what Jesus' second temptation would be. They had been warned against tempting God, but had succumbed to the sin. The Messiah, therefore, must have been tempted likewise, and by prevailing against the adversary, compensate, as it were, for the transgression of his people. For the third temptation, the prototype is less apparent, but it is nevertheless there. One of the most fatal seductions by which the Hebrews were led astray was that of idolatry. Subsequently idolatry became identical with the worship of the devil. The question, therefore, was, How can the worship of Satan be presented to the Messiah? This was done in our third temptation; and not only was this idea expressed, but another important one was combined with it, namely, the idea that the Messiah, as king of the Jewish people, would conquer **Satan**, the ruler of the heathen nations.

So much for Strauss' ingenious method for demonstrating the mythical character of the temptation narrative, and the manner whereby it was formed. Nor have I exhausted his arguments, for ~~he~~ he goes into much greater detail, showing how the other details of the narrative, too, were foreshadowed

and predetermined in Hebrew literature.

Montefiore, too, takes the position that the story is a symbolic myth, and suggests the following causes as having combined to produce it: (1) It was thought that Jesus must have been a conqueror, even greater than the ancient heroes, Abraham and Job, who had triumphed in temptation. (2) One of the functions of the Messiah was to overcome Satan and the demons. (3) The stories of other religions may have influenced the gospel writers. (4) The story puts at the beginning of Jesus' life, in one concentrated and highly imaginative form, certain real temptations which he possibly had to face in the course of his ministry.

Most of the attempts to account for the story as a copying on the part of Christians of similar stories in other religions have been rather superficial and unconvincing; and a lengthy discussion of them here would prove tedious. We shall mention some of them, however, simply in order to make our collection of theories complete. Montefiore, as we have said, suggests such a source for the story. Doane thinks that it originated for the purpose of showing that Christ, as well as Buddha and others, was proof against all temptations, and that he, too, could resist the powers of the prince of evil. Robertson's theory is more ingenious, but less convincing. He maintains that it was evolved from scenes in Pagan art, themselves derived from "the mere misunderstood symbols of the old Babylonian astrotheosophy." For example, the first clue for such an interpretation lies in the detail of the "ex-



ceeding high mountain," [which, unfortunately for the hypothesis, was probably not a part of the original story], "for which we have a marked parallel in a minor Greek myth." It is the story of the young Jupiter being led up by Pan to the mountain which is called the pillar of heaven; he ascends it, and contemplates the lands afar; and there in that mountain he raises an altar to Heaven. On that altar Jupiter first sacrificed. Robertson affirms: "This myth itself, as we shall see, is in all likelihood framed to explain a picture or sculpture; but taken as a starting point, it would clearly suffice, when represented either dramatically or in art, to give the Christians the basis for their story." In a similar way he accounts for the other features of our story of the temptation. He believes that we have the first form of the account in Mark, and in Matthew and Luke we have the elaborated myth.

Suffice to say, there have been frequent attempts to account for the narrative by pointing out the striking parallels in other religions, notably Buddhism and Zoroastrianism, and declaring that Christians must have taken it from these sources, in an effort to show that Jesus, too, had prevailed against the Evil One.

#### D. As a literary product.

B. W. Bacon: The Story of Jesus (1926)

The position taken by Bacon is different from that of others who do not accept the story as historical. Al-

though he agrees with them that there was no particular event in the life of Jesus corresponding to our account of the temptation, he maintains that, instead of its being a legend which the evangelists accepted and recorded as historical, it was composed by the author of "S", probably, in order to illustrate the sense of sonship which Jesus experienced at his baptism. Jesus was known to have been profoundly affected by John, and to have submitted to his baptism of repentance. This was a stumbling block for the early Christians, and their apologists, from Matthew to the writer of the Gospel of the Nazarenes, tried to remove it by various explanations. But the primitive "S" made no attempt to minimize Jesus' indebtedness to John. "S" depicts the baptism experience of Jesus in the language of Ezekiel, and used the poetic imagery of Jewish midrash. According to this early source, Jesus had the same sort of experience at this baptism which all Christians had, that is, he became adopted by God unto sonship. To the author of "S", however, Jesus' baptism involved all that was involved in the baptism of disciples - and much more. Then the ancient source went on to declare in what sense Jesus' calling to sonship should be understood. He based his explanation upon the experience of Israel in the wilderness. Just as God had proved the Hebrews, by suffering them to hunger, in order to know what was in their hearts, and to teach them that man does not live by bread alone, so Jesus was proved in the wilderness. "This Son is not to be fed in the desert with miraculous loaves. He is not to be held

up invulnerable on angels' wings, as the Psalmist had sung of those who take refuge under the wings of the Shekinah. He is not to sit upon the throne of David while the kingdoms of the world bring their glory and honor to his feet. The Son whom God has really chosen to carry his judgments to the Gentiles will tread a path of humble faith and obedience, like the righteous and suffering Servant of Isaiah and of the book of the Wisdom of Solomon."<sup>1</sup>

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1 Op. cit., pp. 139ff.



## Chapter V

## The Temptation as an Inner Experience

As we move away from the idea that the temptations are to be understood as an outward transaction, we delve more and more deeply into the meaning and significance of the three proposals that came to Jesus' mind. The less we are concerned about the externalities of the narrative, the more we become interested in the content. In our second chapter, where the temptation was taken as an outward transaction, the absorbing questions were, In what form did the devil appear?, What was his purpose?, Why did Jesus endure the temptation?, How was he transported from place to place? The three proposals that the devil made were of secondary importance. He selected these merely as "arrows which, as the most likely to prevail, he shot against Christ." Or, as Chrysostom expressed it, the devil "spoke at random what came uppermost" in his mind. But Satan might have chosen others. In fact, Milton represents the devil as debating with his cohorts as to the temptations most likely to be effective. However, when we abandon the idea that the temptation narrative is to be taken as a literal account of an outward transaction, and look upon it as an experience engendered in the soul of Jesus, we become engrossed in the three temptations themselves, and seek to understand their meaning and significance. Let us turn now to those scholars who have taken this latter viewpoint.

A. An inner experience produced by a personal devil.

C. Ullman: The Sinlessness of Jesus (Eng. tr. 1858)  
 W. H. Furness: Jesus and His Biographers (1838)  
 Thomas Wickes: The Son of Man (1868)  
 Cunningham Geikie: The Life and Works of Christ (1900 ed.)  
 James Stalker: The Life of Jesus Christ (1879)  
 Morris Stewart: The Temptation of Jesus (1903)

To this group of writers the story of the temptation is not to be taken in absolute literal fashion. They are not concerned about explaining in what form Satan appeared, nor how Jesus could see the kingdoms of the world from the mountain top. Their interpretations rather seek to show why these particular temptations are enumerated, and what meaning they had for Christ. These critics are not afraid to admit that this was a real experience for Jesus, that he had to choose between alternative proposals, and that they presented him with a real problem. And yet, they are not entirely free from certain doctrines of the person of Christ. They are unwilling to think that these alternatives could have arisen in the mind of Jesus, for such an hypothesis would violate the doctrine of his sinlessness. And so, agreeing that the whole incident took place in the wilderness and in the experience of Jesus, they nevertheless maintain that the personal Power of Evil is responsible for the experience. See, for example, how Furness explains it: "The temptations that assailed him were nowise different from those which assail all other men. He was tempted as we are. But the evil thoughts that rose in his mind are represented as the proposition of an evil being. This

representation is in accordance with the universal belief of the place and the age. Moral evil was attributed to the agency of a malignant spirit. It is of little moment how we suppose it to originate, if only we recognize its existence and influence. .... But there appears to be a peculiar significance in ascribing the temptations of Jesus to an evil being. To his holy nature, evil thoughts must have indeed appeared foreign, and we cannot wonder that they should have been regarded and represented as the suggestion of another, not indeed personally visible, but whispering in the ear of the soul. ... This was conformable to the belief of those times, and who shall presume to decide that it is not conformable to truth? The origin of evil is an unfathomed mystery. .. I know not why evil thoughts may not be attributed to malignant influences from without. ... At all events, we cannot help perceiving a peculiar propriety in describing the temptation of Jesus as originated in this way." The author thus ramifies and comes out at a point which will perhaps surprise, or mystify, a modern reader. Nevertheless, in this expression, we begin to see a new attitude toward the temptations developing.

The attitude of this group of writers is perhaps best stated by Ullman, who writes: "It is evident that the narrative cannot be taken literally. ... There is undoubtedly somewhat of a symbolical character in the manner in which the facts are represented. ... The visible appearance of Satan, and the different situations in which Jesus is pre-



sented to us in the different temptations, may easily belong to the symbolical part of the history. ... Without doing any disparagement to its substantial truth, we may easily conceive that the media through which the devil tempted Jesus was more of a spiritual nature than the letter of the narrative describes, and that those mental experiences, for which it was impossible to find any adequate expression in words, were delineated in a series of striking pictorial representations."

Now as regards the meaning of these three temptations, these writers suppose that they concern the use of the miraculous powers with which Jesus was endowed, and the nature of the Messianic program which he felt called to inaugurate. Geikie, for instance, thinks that Jesus was first tempted to use his powers for self-preservation, but he preferred to trust in God for such necessities. Next he is tempted to inaugurate his work by performing a great miracle; and finally, he is tempted to become a great ruler of the Jews, as they expected the Messiah to be. Jesus, however, determines to use his Messianic gifts and powers only for spiritual ends. According to Furness, Jesus is tempted to make selfish use, first, of his miraculous powers, then of his peculiar privileges, and finally, of his exceptional ability. Wickes thinks that the first was a temptation to prove that he is the Son of God by performing a miracle; the second represents him pondering the question of his manifestation to Israel,

and wondering how the people will accept one who has come to obey and to suffer, when they are expecting one to occupy a throne; and the third is the suggestion of a compromise with the devil, thereby averting war and suffering. Stalker suggests that Jesus was tempted to yield in some measure to the Messianic expectations of the people, who believed that the Messiah would be one who would work dazzling wonders,, and establish a world-wide empire with Jerusalem as its center; and the three temptations were only various modifications of this one thought.

The interpretation of Ullman is unique in that it supposes that Jesus was tempted both as Messiah and as man - both his divine and his human nature thus being subjected. As Messiah he is tempted, first, to employ his miraculous powers for the satisfaction of his own immediate and pressing wants; second, to test that protection which is promised to God's Chosen One, by wilfully running into manifest danger; and, third, to employ worldly means for the realization of his idea of a world-wide theocracy. All these temptations converge into one central and fundamental thought - that of a kingdom which, being to all appearances divine, is in reality of this world, and is accordingly opposed to the Kingdom of God, which must be established first in the hearts of men, and only then become realized externally and visibly. From the standpoint of his human nature, Jesus is tempted, first, to use the gifts of God in the service of self; then to enter any path, however dangerous, and expect the guardianship of God, because of the fact that he is performing a

divine mission; and finally, to desire the world's power and glory. To the temptation of the first kind men are exposed as men; to seductions of the second kind those are liable who believe that they are engaged in some high mission; and to the third kind are attracted those who feel that they are destined to rule.

These writers agree, then, that the temptation was a real experience for Jesus, that he actually had to meet and solve problems concerning the use of his powers and the nature of his office; but they insist that these sinful and erroneous ideas did not arise in the mind of Jesus, but were presented to him by a personal, invisible, devil.

B. An inner experience produced by external facts and conditions.

Augustus Neander: Life of Jesus Christ (Eng.tr.1851)  
 Max Meyer: The Sinlessness of Jesus (Eng.tr. 1907).

There are others who, although denying that a personal power of evil acted directly upon the mind of Jesus to produce the temptation, and eager to maintain that no erroneous or base thought could have germinated in his mind, have advanced the theory that the several temptations were external facts or popular ideas that were forced upon his attention. These were entirely foreign to the thoughts of Jesus, and he was therefore not responsible for them. We shall see present-



ly that many others, who hold to the purely inward nature of the experience, would doubtless agree that the problems that Jesus met were presented to him in this manner. In fact, how otherwise could he have received them? However, passing over such considerations, we shall place Neander and Meyer in a category of their own, because, eager to defend the sinlessness of Jesus, they insist that these ideas were pressed upon his attention by the spirit of the age.

Neander, in fact, might protest against our classifying his interpretation with those which see in the temptations an inner experience. He holds that it is not possible to imagine that Christ, in contemplating the course of his ministry, had an internal struggle to decide whether he should act according to his own will, or in self-denial and submission to the will of God. "From the very beginning he regarded the establishment of a worldly kingdom as inseparable from the worship of the devil; he could, therefore, have had no struggle to choose between such a kingdom, outward and worldly, and the true Messiah-kingdom, spiritual, and developed from within. But even the purest man who has a great work to do must be affected more or less by the prevailing ideas and tendencies of that age. ... Now the whole spirit of the age of Christ held that Messiah's kingdom was to be of this world, and even John the Baptist could not free himself from this conception. ... There was nothing within Christ on which the sinful spirit of the age could seize, but it was to press upon him from without."

Neander, however, connects this spirit of the age with the personal Satan by adding that, if, according to the doctrine of Christ, the rebellion of a higher intelligence against God preceded the whole present history of the universe, and if that doctrine makes Satan the representative of the evil which he first brought into reality, and if it lays down a connection between him and all evil, then Christ's contest with the spirit of the age was a contest with Satan, and the temptation a temptation from Satan. And as it could not have originated in Jesus, Neander holds that it can be attributed only to that spirit to which all opposition to God's kingdom can finally be traced.

Meyer does not attempt to make such a connection with the personal devil, but he does maintain that the temptations were not the fantasies of Jesus' own mind. "The mistaken Messianic idea was not procured by Jesus himself, it was so to speak in the mental air which he inhaled when he was about to appear publicly as the Messiah. He could not grasp and appropriate the true Messianic idea without refusing and rejecting another. The false Messianic idea was an objective fact for the Lord. Thinking of a matter of fact cannot defile, however, so long as it exercises no alluring influence upon feeling and will."

The temptations themselves revolve about Jesus' possession of wonder-working power, and his consciousness of Messiahship. Meyer thinks that the first is a temptation to use his powers for his own interest; the second, to go self-chosen ways, thereby petulantly inviting God's

wondrous power, and to compel men to acknowledge his Messiahship by a visible conquest or by working miracles; and the third, to become faithless to God and accept assistance from the devil, thereby establishing his empire by force and deceit. Neander believes that the temptations were (1) to free himself from his human weakness by the performance of a miracle, (2) to presume upon God's protection, and (3) to establish an outward, worldly kingdom.

C. As an experience arising within Jesus' own mind.

We now come to a consideration of that great body of modern writers who accept the narrative as an historic fact, but not as a literal account of the incident. They accept it, rather, as an imaginative, figurative, pictorial, description of an inner experience, which is in keeping with Jesus' mode of expression. They do not believe that Jesus was actually transported to the temple, nor that he was able to see all the kingdoms of the earth, nor that the words which are recorded actually passed between him and the devil. Most of these writers have rejected the naïve hypothesis of the existence of a personal devil, but those who have not apparently do not insist upon his direct participation in the temptation. In short, they see in the temptation story a deep and real experience that took place in the mind of Jesus. It is not the less real, because it was purely inward; in fact, it is far more real and vital than if it were merely an external transaction. Having



thus disposed of such minor problems as how Jesus travelled about, what form the devil took, and whether or not they recognized each other, attention is directed solely to the content and meaning of the three temptations, and an effort is made to interpret them and to determine their significance for Jesus, and for us. The problem now, however, is equally as great as that which confronted Milton, Wesley, and many others; namely, that of determining what these three thoughts, or proposals, signified, and of what ideas they were symbolical. What were the questions that disturbed the mind of Jesus? What ideas lay behind this picturesque story that he told to his disciples? In the effort to answer these questions many theories have been forthcoming, and we shall now turn to a consideration of the most important of them.

1. Concerning his use of supernatural power.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky: The Brothers Karamazov

J.R. Seeley: Ecce Homo

Henry Latham: Pastor Pastorum

Sir John Robert Seeley believes that at his baptism Jesus received the announcement that he had been called to a most peculiar, preeminent career, and he became conscious that he possessed great, miraculous powers. The temptation of Christ was the excitement of his mind caused by the nascent consciousness of this supernatural power. First, he finds himself in a barren region without food, and is tempted to use his power to relieve his condition;

but he chooses to suffer rather than to use for himself powers which he considers given to him for building the kingdom of God. Next, he rejects the suggestion to test his confidence in divine protection, thereby displaying filial reverence and confidence. Finally, believing in his supernatural power, he is tempted to employ force in establishing his Messianic kingdom. It was natural for him to think that this power had been given to him expressly for the purpose of establishing his kingdom. But he determines, rather, to found his kingdom upon the consent, and not the fears, of mankind, and to use his powers only in doing them good.

Latham more consistently interprets the temptation in the light of Jesus' consciousness of supernatural power. For example, in the second temptation, he feels that Jesus is impelled to use moral compulsion, and by the public display of a resistless manifestation, to make doubt and opposition disappear. But he rejects the thought, as that would have been to paralyse the intellectual growth of mankind. He prefers not to force men to accept his claims involuntarily, but to have them do so of their own will.

One of the most beautiful and stimulating discussions of the temptation to be found anywhere is that of Dostoyevsky in The Brothers Karamazov<sup>1</sup>. The interpretation constitutes a "poem in prose" composed by Ivan, and recited to his brother, Alyosha. The occasion is during the

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<sup>1</sup> Part II, Book V, Chapter V.

Inquisition, in Seville, when Jesus returns to earth, and softly and unobserved moves once more among men. "The people are irresistibly drawn to Him, they surround Him, they flock about Him, follow Him." But the Grand Inquisitor comes upon the scene, and Jesus is arrested as "the worst of heretics". During the evening the Inquisitor comes to Christ's cell in the prison, and the story of the temptation is the basis for their conversation. It is the contention of the Grand Inquisitor that for the masses of men freedom and happiness are incompatible. Freedom will lead men into such straits, and confront them with such insoluble mysteries, that some will destroy themselves, some will resort to destroying one another, and the rest will crawl about weak and unhappy. "There are three powers, three powers alone, able to conquer and hold captive for ever the conscience of these impotent rebels for their happiness - those forces are miracle, mystery, and authority." The Grand Inquisitor holds that during the temptation Jesus rejected all of these, and that for fifteen hundred years the Church has had the task of correcting his work, founding it upon miracle, mystery, and authority. "And men rejoiced that they were again led like sheep." In the first temptation, Jesus rejected the one infallible power for making men bow down to him - that of earthly bread; and "rejected it for the sake of freedom and the bread of Heaven." He failed to realize the fact that men will worship him who gives them bread. Next, Jesus refused the suggestion that he should enslave men by miracle. "Man seeks not so much God as the miraculous". The Inquisitor is convinced that



Jesus did think too highly of men therein, for they are slaves. The third temptation was the suggestion that Jesus "accomplish all that man seeks on earth - that is, some one to worship, some one to keep his conscience, and some means of uniting all in one unanimous and harmonious ant-heap, for the craving of universal unity is the third and last anguish of man." But instead "of taking possession of men's freedom, Thou didst increase it", and placed upon man the responsibility of deciding for himself what is good and what is evil, having only His image before him as a guide.

There have been a great many other writers, as we shall see, and have seen, who believe that Jesus was debating problems as to how he should use his powers, and it has been quite common to accept especially the first temptation in this connection. In the section which follows we shall consider some of these interpretations. But it has seemed advisable to make two divisions, for whereas many look upon the matter of supernatural power as a secondary consideration, the primary concern of Jesus being with the nature and method of his Messianic activity; to Seeley and Latham,<sup>and</sup> to a less extent to Dostoyevsky, the temptation should be understood as an inner struggle, in which Jesus had to solve the problem of how he should employ the marvelous powers of which he had recently become the possessor.

2. Concerning the nature and method of his Messianic activity.

- E. A. Abbott: The Fourfold Gospel, Section II,  
The Beginning.
- W. C. Allen: St. Matthew
- F. L. Anderson: The Man of Nazareth
- Wilhelm Baldensperger: Das Selbstbewusstsein Jesu im Lichte der messianischen Hoffnungen seiner Zeit (1888)
- Georges Berguer: Some Aspects of the Life of Jesus
- C. A. Briggs: New Light on the Life of Jesus
- R. J. Campbell: The Life of Christ
- Marcus Dods: Article "Temptation (in the Wilderness)",  
in The Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels
- John Dow: Jesus and the Human Conflict
- A. E. Garvie: Studies in the Inner Life of Jesus
- A. C. Headlam: Life and Teachings of Jesus the Christ
- Oscar Holtzmann: The Life of Jesus
- Theodor Keim: History of Jesus of Nazara
- C. F. Kent: Life and Teachings of Jesus
- Joseph Klausner: Jesus of Nazareth
- H. J. C. Knight: The Temptation of Our Lord
- Alfred Plummer: An Exegetical Commentary on St. Matthew
- Rush Rhees: Life of Jesus of Nazareth
- J. A. Robertson: The Spiritual Pilgrimage of Jesus
- W. Sanday: The Life of Christ in Recent Research
- David Smith: The Days of His Flesh
- T. J. Thorburn: The Mythical Interpretation of the Gospels
- J. Warschauer: The Historical Life of Christ
- Bernhard Weiss: Life of Christ
- H. H. Wendt: The Teaching of Jesus
- Henry Ware: The Life of the Savior

To this body of scholars, and to many others, the temptation of Jesus must be interpreted in the light of his Messiahship. It was a time when he either wondered if he could be the Messiah, or doubted the validity of his Messianic consciousness, or weighed his own conception of Messiahship against the popular conception, or debated about the type of kingdom he should establish, or formulated plans to guide him in his work. Although no two of these writers agree in their interpretation of the incident, it has seemed wise to consider them in a group, because they all assume

that the temptation was an inner experience for Jesus, during which time he, having become aware of his call to the Messiahship, debated certain questions involved in this task, and growing out of such consciousness.

Warschauer, for instance, believes that at the baptism Jesus became overpowered with a sense of God's nearness and love, and conscious of being set apart for some great work. He had felt the spirit of God in his soul, and had been assured, as plainly as if he had heard a voice from heaven, that he was the Son of God. He must therefore have asked himself, "In what sense am I the Son of God?" He retired into the wilderness to think out his position. The sojourn there was one of inner conflict, in which the recurrent question was, "If I am the Son of God - what then?" In Psalm 2, the words of which were in his mind, the Son of God is the then reigning King of Israel, but later Judaism, he maintains, had given it a Messianic interpretation. The problem for Jesus was, if he knew that he was the Son of God, did it not follow that he must be the Messiah? But he knew that that could not be true, and so the conflict which ensued was caused by the apparent impossibility of reconciling the consciousness of his sonship with what appeared the only admissible interpretation of that consciousness, i.e., as pointing to himself as the Messiah. He is tempted, on the basis of this sonship, of which he is certain, to claim the prerogative, the power, and the position of the expected Messiah; to proclaim himself leader and ruler; to astonish the world with his wonders. But Jesus realized



that such lures were not worthy of his divine sonship. He knew that these were characteristics of the coming Messiah, but to such a work he did not feel himself called. Jesus' victory over temptation lay in his refusal to follow the popular path, and his determination to wait for fuller light and guidance from his Father. Consequently, Jesus kept ~~no~~ Messianic secret, for as yet there was no Messianic secret for him to keep.

The interpretation given by Allen also implies that there was some doubt in the mind of Jesus. He believes that in the first temptation Jesus felt the impulse to put to test the consciousness of divine sonship which he possessed; in the second he was tempted to put God to the test; and in the third, to grasp at once at the sovereignty of the world, which his Messianic consciousness led him to expect in the future. But Jesus refused thus to test his convictions, and to hasten events prematurely, by methods which involved rebellion against God's will.

An unique interpretation is that given by Berguer, from the viewpoint of psycho-analysis. Jesus had just passed through an exalting experience, and the time had now come for him to translate into living works the "life-urge" with which he felt himself flooded. In such a position, and in his environment, the natural expression of the religious genius lay along lines of Messianism. The time had come for him to begin - but how? That was the momentous question which he faced. He was to be the Messiah, or something tantamount to that; but how was he to do it? It is the temptation

which most people have, to miss their own life, to lose it in paths where it will not give them what it should and can give. Psychologically Jesus' temptation was the temptation to introversion. Berguer quotes from Silberer to show how a crisis of introversion may be solved. There are three possible issues: magic, dementia praecox, and mysticism. (1) One who is on the road to introversion may fail in action by seeking the satisfaction of his passions in an artificial manner. It is this which, among primitive people, has given rise to magic. (2) He may stop short with the dream, creating about him an imaginary world to take the place of the real world. This is the neurosis which is known as dementia praecox. The victim of this malady is no longer aware of what surrounds him, but lives in his imaginary world. (3) The introvert may take to the mystic life, creating in himself an unity between his outer tasks and his inner experiences. The mystic life, as a matter of fact, does not always represent a state of equilibrium. There is a healthy mysticism and an unhealthy mysticism. "Consequently, a final danger of introversion consists in leading one into morbid aberrations of the mystical life, through a neglect of the moral control exercised over the impulses that spring up from the subconscious and are liable to pour into the consciousness pell-mell and pervert it." The temptation of Jesus, then, should be interpreted in the light of these three possible issues. (1) By becoming a magician Messiah, working many miracles, he could doubtless insure his success. Jesus rejected such a suggestion. In so doing he set bounds to his success in the world, but he recognized the true

rights of life. He refused to displace life's axis, and to violate its authentic meaning. (2) The temptation that he leap from the pinnacle of the temple was a temptation to fanaticism. Jesus is tempted to commit an act of folly, to sever himself from reality, to become a half-demented Messiah no longer living in a real world. Here was the temptation to take refuge in the dream, thereby escaping reality. This, too, Jesus escapes. (3) Finally there was the temptation to false mysticism. It is possible to be the Messiah by preserving the appearance of piety, while consenting to compromise with the spirit of the times. He is tempted to become the sort of Messiah that the people want - a cautious, prudent, leader, who will act in harmony with the authorities, and gradually consummate a national revolution in which religion and politics will be allies. To adore the devil is to deflect into paths that lead nowhere "a part of the elan vital which ought to help one to embrace life's tasks and accomplish them; to divert it from its sole legitimate end; to prevent its sublimation." Jesus escaped, too, this third pitfall.

Perhaps a majority of the modern writers take the temptations as an account of how Jesus rejected the current Messianic ideals and adopted his own, or rather God's, principles and methods and ends to guide him in his work. Marcus Dodg's view is typical of this group. He believes that at his baptism Jesus received his call to the Messiahship, and that the necessity was laid upon him of determining



what sort of Messiah he would be, and how he would set about his task. There were present to his mind as possible courses the various expectations current among the people. They presented themselves to him in the form of three questions: Am I as Messiah lifted above human needs and trials? What means may I legitimately use to convince the people of my claims? What kind of Messianic king as I to represent? To each of these questions there was an answer ready, which was cherished by most of the people among whom he was to work, and with much that superficially commended it. (1) He is tempted to use his powers for his own comfort and preservation; (2) he is tempted to establish his Messianic claim by the performance of some dazzling and astounding feat; and (3) he is tempted to found an earthly kingdom, such as many expected and would promptly aid him to secure. He recognized all of these as satanic, and rejected them.

Abbott presents a very thoughtful study of the temptations, and one which resembles somewhat that found in The Brothers Karamazov. It is Abbott's opinion that during the temptation Jesus was debating the method whereby he would undertake his work; and that in the three instances coercion is the method which Jesus is tempted to adopt, but which he consistently rejects. He would not hear to using coercion in bringing men to God, or in destroying the hostility to God, or in developing loyalty to him on the part of his disciples.

Still different is the interpretation proposed by Klausner. He says, "Obsessed by the idea that he was the Messiah, Jesus meditated on the three methods by which, according to the current view, the Messiah would declare himself." (1) The Jewish Messiah must bestow upon his people material welfare, but Jesus rejected this as a principle of his Messiahship since it seemed to him too gross. (2) The Jewish Messiah must be mighty in the Torah, since there rested upon him "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of council and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord" (Is. 11:2). This temptation contains a reference to the temple - the site of the Hewn Chamber, where the law was expounded by the priests and scribes. But Jesus rejected this idea. He saw the defects of the scribes and Pharisees, and later found fault with them, sometimes rightly and sometimes wrongly. And again, what could a Galilean carpenter do toward introducing anything new into the substance of law and of knowledge generally? (3) Primarily the Messiah is the King who overcomes the gentiles and rules over them by force. Jesus rejected such an idea, because his dreamy, spiritual nature was not fitted for such methods, and contemporary conditions rendered them impossible. "What was then left of the Messianic idea?" asks Klausner. Nothing was left but to conceal his claim, and until John was arrested Jesus did nothing. But when Jesus heard that John was in prison, he thought that the time had come for him to take John's place. Who or where was the Messiah Jesus did not say.

### 3. Concerning political problems of the Jews.

Stephen Liberty: The Political Relations of Christ's Ministry

V. G. Simkhovitch: Toward the Understanding of Jesus.

Here we have two intensely interesting interpretations of the temptation narrative, where Jesus' experience is seen in the light of current political and religious problems which faced the Jewish people. These writers look upon the temptation as the time when Jesus faced and solved those problems.

Liberty would try to understand Jesus in relation to the historical situation of his time. The crucial question of the age was presented by the political relations of Jews and Romans to one another in the first century A. D. The problem in the balance was whether religion, in the form of a vital and ethical force as it was with the Jews, could survive the breaking down of national barriers and the diffusion of the Italo-Hellenic culture, which constituted the policy of the Roman Empire. In general, the attitudes of the Jews were as follows: (1) The Sadducees had abandoned the idea of religious vocation for the Jews. The nation's whole religious heritage was looked upon as being a means, not for bringing the world to God, but for the glorification and enrichment of a few aristocratic families. (2) The Pharisees represented the antithesis of the worldly attitude of the Sadducees. They were convinced that the Jews were called to be a holy race, denying itself all the seductions of the world. The nation should, by its example, gather in as many of the heathen as



possible for the strict observance of the law; and some day, not by force or by alliance with secular powers, but by the interposition of God, the Kingdom would be inaugurated, the heathen would be defeated, and the saints would become supreme over the world. (3) The third group, the Herodians, unlike the selfish Sadducees and the fanatical Pharisees, adopted a friendly attitude toward the Romans. They hoped to work out a compromise between the stubborn nationalism of the Jews and the Roman ideal of orderly government. Their ambition was to build up a semi-native kingdom in Palestine, set their own house in order, achieve a prudent compromise between Judaism and Paganism, and become recognized as the official head of universal Judaism. They would then cooperate with the Romans in their work of civilization, and might some day rise on the stepping-stone of such an alliance to the actual supremacy of the world.

During the temptation, therefore, Jesus faced these problems. The temptation to turn stones into bread is symbolical of the policy of the Sadducees, but Jesus rejected it, because to regard God as concerned only with the material sustenance and mere survival of the nation is a fatal misconception of Israel's calling. Next the attitude of the Pharisees is presented to Jesus for his consideration, and he rejected it as being equivalent to tempting God. It may give the appearance of tremendous faith, but it is really scepticism, with its implication that, if God does not come up to the human test, He is no God. Finally, the policy

of the Herodians is considered. The meaning of the temptation is that the Chosen People, with its virility, its spiritual heritage, its hope, has the world at its feet, if it will use its powers to win it in a common sense way. The experiment was already going on in the Gentile fringes of the Holy Land, and Jesus himself had been brought up within sight of it. He saw how the Herodian family had been succeeding in the task of uniting large Gentile populations under a nominally Jewish rule. But he saw, too, that the ambition of the Herodians could not be attained without compromising in its allegiance. The policies of the Herods was equivalent to a prostration of Israel before the spirit of Paganism. That was the price of gaining the whole world.

As a consequence of this period of meditation and struggle, then, Jesus became convinced that the only remedy for the situation would be for the Jews to rise at once to an understanding of their true vocation, the vocation of showing mercy to the world, of giving freely their knowledge of God for the benefit of humanity, rather than sullenly insisting on religious privileges as an exclusive possession.

Simkhovitch attempts, too, to interpret Jesus in the light of the historical background. He says that at this time there was but one problem for the Jews - a single, all-absorbing national problem, that became, under the circumstances, the religious problem as well. It was the problem of existence, in the face of Roman pressure - the problem

of escape from certain annihilation. To the individual the problem presented itself in the form of alternatives, and the temptations are parables of these alternatives. To Jesus the popular solutions of the problem looked like temptations of the devil. One solution is symbolized by the leap from the temple. Here are the holy city, the temple, and God's Chosen People. Can He allow them to perish? No! Hence the combat with the entire world - Rome - cannot end in anything but victory for the Jews. This was the Zealot nationalist solution. Then there was the alternative of exactly the opposite nature. Let Roman civilization supersede Judaism. The Jews, it was proposed, should accept Rome and its culture and become Romans; then, indeed, the entire world would be theirs, and the glory of the Romans would also be theirs. This was the temptation to worship Satan. Between these two extremes were many intermediary positions, chief among them being the one that had no other aspiration than to live, and to live by bread alone.

Jesus was opposed to resistance to Rome, but he was equally opposed to submission with hatred in one's heart. He came to realize, through his intellectual insight, that what counts in life and constitutes life is the inner reaction; and that so-called outward facts to which we have no inner reactions are not part of our life. The outward world is a part of us only to the extent that we react to it. It is, therefore, with the inner attitude, which determines our reactions and thereby our lives, that Jesus



dealt. The kingdom of heaven, Jesus knew, lies within. He saw that the only thing that could save his people was a profound spiritual experience, a humble submission to God's will. Consequently, he taught, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Here is quite a different solution of the problem, a solution "which came to Jesus on fiery wings of exaltation." He could now show the way to the lost sheep.

#### 4. Concerning his divinity.

G. Stanley Hall: Jesus, the Christ, in the Light of Psychology.

To Hall, the period of the temptation was the time when Jesus, who had come into a realization of his divinity, sought to determine the meaning of such a revelation. At his baptism it had been announced to him that he was God's beloved son, and he immediately retired into the desert to meditate upon this thought. To him it meant, of course, a call to the Messiahship. But stronger and deeper came the feeling that this was not a mere rôle, but that he was in truth God's son, not simply by appointment, but in his very inmost nature. Others had thought themselves divine, but Jesus possessed an assurance which sur-

passed theirs. Jesus knew himself to be the veritable God-man. God had not merely come to consciousness in him, but was his "own ipsissimal noumenal self." God is man, and man is God. God had been thought objective, but now is seen to be only the inmost subjectivity of man. Thus his struggling soul found rest and peace.

Then he had to turn his thoughts to the world of other men, and he wondered what could be done with this new insight. It had been hard to grasp, and he realized that it would be next to impossible to teach. It was a thought far above most men, and could be understood, he knew, only by the chosen few. To speak of himself as divine would be but blasphemy to most persons. And so Jesus became convinced that his only course was to begin a campaign of education. His would have to be a method of teaching of an entirely new type, fitted to the novelty of his message. He would have to be content to see in his pupils only a progressive approximation to his precious conviction.

He could not hope to have others attain his state of mind, if he adopted a method of solitude, fasting, and prayer. He would have to resort to objective demonstration. The people would demand a sign, he knew. To perform a miracle, in his day, was the accepted manner for proving one's self superhuman. Divinity was judged by this criterion.

Just at that moment, due to the pangs of hunger, a

doubt arose in his mind whether he could really perform a miracle. It occurred to him, that if he were really God's son, and if he were divine, he would certainly have the power to convert stones into food. If he should fail in such an attempt, he must be a fool or insane to deem himself divine. But he determined that he would not be diverted from his pursuit of the bread of life for mankind, to mere lust for eating and drinking. Bodily needs are insignificant beside the higher life, and in his thoughts there would be no place for the indulgence of sense.

In "another day-dream, vivid to the point of hallucination," Jesus seemed to feel that he was on a dizzy point of the temple, and feels the impulse to cast himself down. This he would do to test God's fidelity. But immediately he regarded the suggestion as unfit and absurd. Discretion prevailed over impulse. It was natural in that age for one to crave some miracle; but Jesus needed no such proof for his convictions, nor would he adopt miracle-mongering as a part of his program.

There was, then, a third problem. The people were oppressed by Rome, and they eagerly awaited the coming of a great military leader who would lift their yoke. Jesus thought that, if he be divine, such emancipation of his people must be within his reach. To achieve this ambition, however, he would have to place might above right, he would have to be unpitying and ruthless. To grasp the sovereignty of the world, he would have to adopt means that were not to his approval. How much of Jesus' decision was due to worldly prudence, and how much to the insight of his religious



genius, we cannot say. But the program had no appeal to him. His would be the opposite sort of policy. Serve, not rule; be least, not greatest, last, not first; meek, not proud; poor, not rich; found the kingdom within, and not without; let it develop secretly and slowly, and not come suddenly with ostentation and abservation; and if necessary, let its citizens be recruited from the Gentiles and the outcasts.

Thus Jesus emerged from the wilderness, with a pure and certain consciousness of his identity with God, devoted to a great undertaking, with an outline and method of procedure. He was divine in a sense in which none before or since has been. He had come to the realization that man is God, and God is man.

##### 5. Concerning non-Messianic religious leadership.

E.I.Bosworth: Life and Teaching of Jesus

S. J. Case: Jesus: A New Biography

Some have looked upon the baptism of Jesus as his <sup>be</sup> call to/a religious, but not the Messianic, leader of his people. The temptations, accordingly, would reflect his thoughts concerning such a career. Bosworth believes that Jesus was not conscious of his Messiahship until later in his ministry; while Case maintains that he never pretended to be the Jewish Messiah at all. According to Bosworth, Jesus, at his baptism, received a summons within the depths of his soul to some form of leadership, and there arose

questions in his mind as to what ideal of life God's beloved son ought to hold before the people as he leads them into the New Age, and what practical program should be adopted for realizing this ideal. For the consideration of these problems Jesus retired into the wilderness. Everyone expected the New Age to be characterized not only by obedience to God's law, but also by abundance of food and other physical comforts. But Jesus realized that the first responsibility of God's son was not to provide food and physical comforts, but to persuade men to listen to the voice of God. He knew that if he could secure such a disposition on the part of men, human brotherhood would result and physical comforts would abound. He determined to attack the cause of the disease and not simply to alleviate its symptoms. Then he reflected upon the feasibility of his going to the temple, and expecting God to present him to the nation by some impressive miracle as leaping from the pinnacle unharmed. Such a plan, however, seemed to him not to have God's approval. Finally, he is tempted to strive for a world empire through a compromise with evil. To the Jews the kingdom of God was to be a world empire in which Jerusalem would be the capital and all positions of influence held by Jews. Jesus, therefore, by all the traditions of his people, was compelled to think of such a program. The temptation, however, lay in the method for accomplishing this purpose. The method that is represented as having come to his mind was that of a temporary compromise with evil. He quickly saw, however, the fallacy of such a plan, and declared that man should never cease from worshipping and

serving God alone. And so, Jesus resolved that at any cost he would obey God; that his first purpose would be to bring men into fellowship with God so that they would listen to His voice; that he would make no startling announcement of his Messianic mission or even be sure that his mission was Messianic; and that he would never compromise with any form of evil, regardless of the expediency with which it came clothed.

Case also takes the baptism experience to have been Jesus' call to religious leadership. It would have been entirely out of place in the life of his day, Case points out, had he chosen this task with utter calmness and deliberation. To forsake his handicraft and become a preacher was a radical change for him. In the presence of such a task and responsibility, and with the divine call ringing in his ears, he could not help but feel his limitations. He had to face the question as to how an unschooled workman, with a call to leadership, should proceed about the task. He could not lightly abandon his occupation and ignore the problem of securing food and the other necessities of life. He knew how insistent were the people for unusual displays of God's favor. He realized that the psychology of his day invited the activity of leaders who could demonstrate with miracle their divine equipment to institute a revolt against Rome. For Jesus, though, the path of duty lay in another direction. He would make no claims upon God for food; he would not ask for protection and assistance of angels; and he would wait for God Himself to abolish the



rule of Rome. The times were wicked, and the day of judgment was at hand. The great need of the hour was to summon the Jewish people to a life in accord with the will of God. Unreservedly Jesus gave himself to the pursuit of such a task.

. In such manner, therefore, has the temptation story been interpreted. It would seem that the last person in the world to propose another interpretation would be one who had investigated the many theories which had been proposed in the past. All interpreters seem to have had complete assurance and confidence in the finality of their hypotheses. Did not Farmer declare that his theory "obviates all the objections.... justifies the wisdom of God..... exalts the character of Christ .... confirms our faith ..... and affords instruction to disciples"? Did not Dawson say that the temptation, following so closely upon the baptism by John, could not have been other than an experience growing out of Jesus' association with the Baptist? Did not Crosby say that the whole story "demands" the view that the devil appeared as a holy man? Cook insisted that there is no legitimate reason for doubting Satan's visible appearance, and others have been equally insistent upon their particular viewpoint. In spite of these warnings, however, I shall defend, in the following pages, what I consider a still more reasonable interpretation of the incident.

PART III

C R I T I C A L

## Chapter VI

## The Historicity of the Temptation Story

The position of those who deny the historicity of the narrative is well taken, because it must be admitted that there are many features of the story that make one regard it with suspicion. There is a concreteness about the appearance of Satan, the impression of an actual conveyance through the air, the improbability of so long a fast, the question of Jesus' consciousness of power to perform the proposed miracles, the occurrence of the typical numbers, three and forty, and the striking parallels in the Old Testament, in later Jewish writings, and in the literature of other religions. Consequently, as we have seen, many critics have regarded the story as unhistorical, and have proposed numerous reasons to account for its fabrication. The following are perhaps the most reasonable:

- (1) It is an elaboration of Mark's brief account.
- (2) It was a dream or a vision,
- (3) It was given by Jesus originally as a parable,
- (4) It was composed by an early historian, perhaps the author of "S", in the effort to explain the sense in which the divine sonship of Jesus should be understood.

(5) The story grew out of certain accounts of real problems and temptations with which Jesus had to grapple in the course of his ministry, and some ancient writer simply collected them, and put them into concrete form at the beginning of Jesus' public life.



(6) It represents the attempt on the part of early Christians to show that Jesus, as well as Buddha and others, was able to resist the powers of the prince of evil.

(7) It is the attempt of disciples to explain what occurred during a period of Jesus' retirement.

(8) It is the result of the popular belief that one function of the Messiah was to conquer Satan and the demons.

(9) It came out of the supposition that Jesus must have achieved a victory over the tempter similar to that won by the great heroes of Hebrew antiquity.

(10) It grew in the attempt to show that Jesus was able to overcome those temptations to which the people of Israel had succumbed.

It should be noted, however, that the legendary features can be discarded without disturbing the essential elements of the story. We may deny the actual appearance of Satan, reject the idea that Jesus was transported through the air and that he could see all the kingdoms of the world, doubt that he ate nothing throughout this period, or that he really spent forty days in the wilderness, and the importance of the narrative as an historical incident is not diminished. In other words, the significance of the story depends not in the slightest degree upon the miraculous features.

Nor is it reasonable to believe that the story of Matthew and Luke is an elaboration of the simple account of

Mark. If we accept the theory that the narrative was found originally in "S", which cannot be doubted, and that "S" antedated Mark and was perhaps one of his sources, such an explanation is precluded. But in addition to this, a comparison of the account of Mark with that of the other synoptics makes it exceedingly unlikely that Mark's story is the earlier. Case<sup>1</sup> points out that whereas in Matthew and Luke Jesus refuses to perform miracles and submits to the will of God as an obedient and dutiful son, in Mark he is shown to be transported into the sphere of the supernatural, where <sup>he</sup> is immune from the danger of wild beasts, is attended by ministering angels, and does not suffer the pangs of hunger. Taylor<sup>2</sup> also calls attention to the fact that the conception of sonship in the longer account "is deeply ethical and religious. It is a sonship which demands restraint in the exercise of miraculous power. It is also a sonship consistent with the worship and service of God: 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.' The importance of this quotation has not been sufficiently realized; it is one which would hardly have been made if an advanced doctrine of sonship lay behind the story. The sonship is clearly moral and volitional; it consists in perfect submission to, and conformity with, the mind and will of God." It is therefore

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1 S. J. Case: Jesus: A New Biography, pp. 261 ff.

2 Vincent Taylor: Behind the Third Gospel

hardly possible that the Markan account, which suggests an advanced, supernatural doctrine of sonship, is earlier than the simple, primitive doctrine of the other evangelists. It is natural that Christians should move away from the idea of a realistic struggle in the mind of Jesus, and Mark is the first evidence we have for such a tendency.

It is equally unsatisfactory to suppose that Jesus was reporting a dream or a vision, or that he was giving a parable of warning to his disciples. In the first place, there are no grounds in the records for supposing such an hypothesis, nor does an interpretation of the story demand it. Furthermore, we have no reason to believe that Jesus was subject to such visionary experiences. As for its being a parable, it was not the habit of Jesus to use himself as a character in his own stories, nor is it likely that he would have obscured his meaning so successfully that all succeeding generations would have failed to appreciate it. His parables were used to illustrate, and not to conceal, his teachings. Obviously, such explanations as these do not warrant serious consideration. There is not the slightest evidence in the accounts upon which to base these theories; and most of them have been advanced in the effort to account for certain features of the story which can be better accounted for by the fact that Jesus persistently used figures of speech<sup>1</sup>.

As for the theory that the story was taken from the

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<sup>1</sup> For a criticism of these interpretations see D. F. Strauss: Life of Jesus, p. 265.



literature of other religions, a glance at these other stories will be sufficient to convince one that there could not have been any dependence. Let us take first the temptations of the Buddha. We are told that as Gautama was leaving home in his search for enlightenment, Māra stopped him saying, "Depart not, O my lord! for in seven days from now the wheel of empire will appear, and will make you sovereign over the four continents and the two thousand adjacent isles." To this Gautama replied: "It is not sovereignty that I desire. I will become a Buddha, and make the ten thousand world-systems shout for joy." Māra thereupon determined that he would follow him, and seek for an opportunity to deter him. We read then that Gautama, having thus made light of the kingdoms of the world, casting them from him "as one would saliva", left the city. Soon afterwards there came to him a desire to gaze once more upon his home, and at that instant "the broad earth revolved like a potter's wheel, and was stayed; saying, as it were, to him, 'O Great Being, there is no need for you to stop in order to fulfil your wish'." Then he went on, with angels in front of him carrying sixty thousand torches, and with other angels behind him, and on either side. Deities on the edge of the horizon held torches aloft, and others bore him company.<sup>1</sup>

Later, as Gautama sat under the Bo-tree, Māra sought again to defeat him. He gathered his army, which stretched

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1 Buddhist Birth Stories, translated by T.W.Rhys-Davids, pp. 83 ff.

twelve leagues before him, twelve leagues to right and left of him, behind him to the rocky limits of the world, and above him nine leagues in height. The sound of its war cry could be heard twelve leagues away, like the sound of an earthquake. Māra mounted his elephant, which was two hundred fifty leagues high, and "created for himself a thousand arms, and seized all kinds of weapons." Gautama had a host of angels with him; but at the sight of this army they fled, leaving him alone. Seeing how he was deserted, he said, "Against me alone this mighty host is putting forth all its energy and strength. No father is here, nor mother, nor brother, nor any other relative to help me. But the ten cardinal virtues have long been to me as retainers fed from my store. So, making the virtues my shield, I must strike this host with the sword of virtue, and thus overwhelm it."

Māra made ten attempts to defeat his enemy. First he caused a whirlwind to blow. It was so strong that it could have "torn down the peaks of mountains three leagues high, and rooted up forests, and destroyed towns and villages." But they reached Gautama with their power gone, and not even the hem of his robe was shaken. Next he caused the rain to fall. The earth was saturated, and the forests covered. "But it was not able to wet on his robe even the space where a dew-drop might fall." Then Māra caused a shower of rock to fall, but as they reached the Great Being, "they changed into bouquets of heavenly flowers." Next

came a storm of deadly weapons, followed by showers of charcoal, then of ashes, then of sand, then of mud, and then a thick darkness, but all failed. Finally, Māra cast at him his sceptre-javelin, which was able to "cleave asunder a pillar of solid rock as if it were a tender twig," but it became for Gautama a garland canopy. Then the Great Being himself challenged Māra to a contest to decide which of them had been greater in bestowing alms. Māra called upon his hosts to testify, and they shouted the praises of their leader. Gautama then called upon the Earth, "unconscious though it be", to bear witness of "the seven hundred-fold great alms" which he gave when he was born. "And the great Earth uttered a voice, saying, 'I am witness to thee of that!' overwhelming, as it were, the hosts of the Evil One." <sup>1</sup>

Some weeks later the three daughters of Māra , Craving, Discontent, and Lust, found their father brooding over his failures, and asked him the reason for his sorrow. He told them of the illustrious mendicant who was escaping from his power, and they volunteered to come to his assistance, believing that they would have little difficulty in subjecting any man to their influence. They accordingly approached Gautama, but he, plunged in the joy of Nirvana, paid no attention to them. Thereupon each of the daughters assumed the appearance of a hundred women, of various types, hoping to appeal in some way to the Great One. But he said to them,

I T. W. Rhys-Davids, op. cit., pp. 96 ff.



"Depart ye! Why strive ye thus? Such things might be done in the presence of men who linger in the paths of sin, but I have put away lust, have put away ill-will, have put away folly." The three daughters therefore returned to their father, and agreed that he had spoken the truth when he said that the Blessed One was not by any means to be led away by an unholy desire.<sup>1</sup>

We have also an account of the temptations of Zarathustra, which some have thought served as the prototype for the New Testament story.<sup>2</sup> We are told that Angra Mainyu from the region of the north (i.e., from hell), sent forth the demon Bûiti to kill Zarathustra. But when the demon approached him, Zarathustra began to chant aloud the Ahuna-Vairya, a prayer which was thought to be of great efficacy and which was widely used. "The will of the Lord is the law of righteousness. He who relieves the poor makes Ahura king." He offered the sacrifice to the good waters of the good Dâitya. He recited the profession of the worshippers of Mazda. Thereupon the demon Bûiti rushed away, and reported to Angra Mainyu that he saw no way to kill the holy man.

Then Angra Mainyu himself came to Zarathustra and proposed to him riddles to be solved under the pain of death. But Zarathustra took up stones which he had obtained from

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1 T. W. Rhys-Davids, op. cit., pp. 106 ff.

2 The Zend-Avesta, Vendidad, Fargard XIX, in the Sacred Books of the East.

Ahura Mazda, began swinging them in his hands, and threatened to destroy the whole creation of the Evil One. Whereupon Angra Mainyu called out, "Do not destroy my creatures, O holy Zarathustra! ..... Renounce the good religion of the worshippers of Mazda, and thou shalt gain such a boon as Vadhaghna gained, the ruler of the nations." [Vadhaghna was a legendary king who is said to have ruled the world for a thousand years.] To this Zarathustra replied, "No! never will I renounce the good religion of the worshippers of Mazda, either for body or life, though they should tear away the breath." The Evil One then asked him with what weapons he would strike and repel his enemies, to which Zarathustra replied that he would use the sacred mortar, cups, and Haoma (i.e., the sacrificial instruments), and the sacred Word. Zarathustra then called upon Ahura, "This I ask thee; teach me the truth, O Lord!", and the Tempter departed from him.

It will be seen therefore that the only resemblance between these stories and that of Jesus' temptation is that in all three accounts there is the offer of world dominion. But even here there is a difference. Buddha is offered the sovereignty of the world if he will remain at home and abandon his search for enlightenment; Zarathustra, if he will forsake the good religion of the worshippers of Mazda; and Jesus, if he will fall down and worship Satan. In all other respects the stories are quite different. True, they all employ symbolism, hyperbole, and personification; but the

Christian narrative is so brief and moderate in comparison with the other two that it is impossible to believe that it is dependent upon them. It is hardly probable that the adherents of one religion, in taking over material from another faith, would tone it down to the extent that we see here. The picture of Jesus, refusing to work miracles, declining the offer of the protection of angels, enduring hunger, but through it all trusting God, and determining to worship and serve him, offers quite a contrast to the unperturbed Buddha and Zarathustra. It would not be impossible for one to make out a strong case for the theory that the Buddhist and Zoroastrian stories grew from the Christian, were it not for the fact that they are older; but the contrary opinion is as preposterous as it is unverifiable.<sup>1</sup>

The same thing might be said with regard to the parallels in the Old Testament. In comparing the temptations of Jesus with those of the heroes of the Old Testament, we find that they are very unlike, the circumstances, motives, and outcome being different. Edersheim calls attention to the fact: "Neither Moses nor Elijah were assailed by the devil. Moses fasted in the middle, Elijah at the end, Jesus at the beginning of his ministry. Moses fasted in the presence of God, Elijah alone, Jesus assaulted by the devil. Moses had been called up by God, Elijah had gone forth in

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1 Cf. T.J.Thorburn: The Mythical Interpretation of the Gospels.



the bitterness of his own spirit, Jesus was driven by the Spirit. Moses failed after his forty days' fast, when in indignation he cast the Tables of the Law from him, Elijah failed before his forty days, Jesus was assailed for forty days and endured the trial."<sup>1</sup>

It would seem, then, that the most we can say concerning the dependence of Jesus' temptation upon those of other religious geniuses is that he, like them, passed through a period of difficult decision. But does it therefore follow that the temptation of Jesus is a myth? By no means! On the contrary, it indicates that we should expect to find such an incident in his life. As one writer puts it, "If the gospels had not recorded a temptation we should have had to assume it."<sup>2</sup> If experiences of this sort occur in the lives of most religious leaders, does not that very fact point to the historicity of this story, rather than to its legendary character?

As regards the historicity of the temptation narrative, then, may we not say, in the first place, that such an experience was psychologically necessary for Jesus? He had just passed through the experience of baptism. That the baptism by John was an historical fact can hardly be questioned. Christians of the first century would gladly have discarded such a narrative, had it not been so firmly ground-

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<sup>1</sup> A. Edersheim: Life of Jesus, p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> Rhees: Life of Jesus of Nazareth, p. 86.

ed upon fact. But it was so generally known that Jesus had been baptized by John that Christian apologists were driven to explain why Jesus had accepted a "baptism of repentance unto remission of sins." In Matthew we have the explanation that John would have hindered him, but Jesus insisted, "Suffer it now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." It is then shown that the remarkable phenomena connected with the baptism were designed to announce to John and the other witnesses that Jesus is the Christ. In the "Gospel according to the Hebrews" we have a different story. When asked by his mother and brothers to go and be baptized, Jesus said, "Wherein have I sinned, that I should go and be baptized of him? unless peradventure this very thing that I have said is a sin of ignorance." Now see how the question is handled in the Fourth Gospel. John 1:29ff. reads: "On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming to him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man who is become before me. And I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel, for this cause came I baptizing in water. And John bare witness, saying, I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and it abode upon him." There is no mention here that Jesus was baptized at all. Mark simply says that Jesus "came and was baptized of John in the Jordan." There is no indication that the strange phenomena were outwardly visible, or that they are other than symbols describing an inner experience

of Jesus. This story of Jesus' baptism at the hands of John would certainly never have been invented by Christians, many of whom were so eager either to discard it or to explain it in some acceptable manner; and the probability, therefore, is that it came from Jesus himself. Moreover, it must have been an experience of tremendous significance for him. It was not Jesus' habit to talk about himself, and yet he considered the baptism of sufficient importance to be passed on to his disciples. If, then, the baptism were of such import to Jesus, it is reasonable to suppose that it was followed by a period of meditation, at which time he sought to determine the meaning and significance of his experience. It would be far more difficult to dispose of the temptation narrative than to account for its presence.<sup>1</sup>

A second reason for accepting the narrative as historical is the fact that it is not the type of story that Christians are likely to have invented. It is not difficult to account for the appearance of miracle stories. They are to be found in every religion. But it is inconceivable that the worshippers of Jesus, or of any other person, would originate accounts of how he had been baptized for remission of sins, rejected by family and friends,<sup>had</sup> refused to perform miracles, had undergone a severe spiritual struggle, and had endured crucifixion. Nor could such a legend have originated

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1 Cf. Georges Berguer: Some Aspects of the Life of Jesus, where an interesting discussion of the baptism, from the viewpoint of psycho-analysis, is presented.



in the attempt to show that the Messiah had been tempted in accordance with current expectations, as some have alleged, for there were no traditions to the effect that the Messiah would be tempted. Thus, there are no grounds for believing that the Jews expected the Messiah to be tempted, and that Christians invented the story in order to fulfil such expectations.<sup>1</sup> If they had set themselves to devising a temptation narrative, it is quite unlikely that they would have, or even could have, produced such a story as we have. As has been mentioned elsewhere, the "S" account pictures Jesus as an obedient and submissive son of God, who refuses to attempt to work miracles, rejects the assistance and protection of angels, and resolves to worship and serve God alone. Would his followers and worshippers have invented such a story, or imagined such a picture? The legends of the saints show what sort of trials are the product of the imagination, and they differ totally from this story about Jesus. Furthermore, if the interpretation of the temptation which is proposed in this thesis be at all correct, this narrative reflects a spiritual insight and a touch of religious genius which we invariably associate with Jesus. Take, for example, the way in which the Scriptures are handled in the story. We know that Jesus read the Old Testament with critical eyes. It is true that his criticism was not of the historical and literary type of the twentieth century; it was religious. Jesus knew how to separate the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Thorburn: The Mythical Interpretation of the Gospels, p. 133.

Latham: Pastor Pastorum, pp. 121ff.

essential from the non-essential, the true from the false, the more valuable from the less valuable - and he did not hesitate to do so. He would set aside doctrines and traditions which, by his own religious experience, he knew were untrue or outgrown. Now this is just the way that the Scriptures are handled in the temptation story. Jesus saw in Psalm 91 a temptation of Satan, and not a promise of God; the popular expectation of world dominion, which was looked for as a gift of God, he rejected as a snare of the devil. Jesus handled the Scriptures in a courageous, unconventional, critical fashion, which was anything but common for his day. Easton supports the view that the narrative is historical on these grounds, saying: "The hypothesis of a secondary origin for these verses seems excluded. It would necessitate an editor who could abstract these principles from the mass of detailed events, recognize them as temptations, reclothe them in the concrete form of this section, give the whole an accurate psychological background, and, by no means least difficult, abstain from explanatory moralizing. Such a task was beyond the powers of any one in the apostolic or post-apostolic age."<sup>1</sup>

A third reason for rejecting the idea that the story is a myth, is the fact that it survived, when there was, apparently, a desire to discard it, or, at least, to interpret it in becoming fashion. The gospels themselves give some evidence of the attitude of early Christians to the narrative. In "S"

<sup>1</sup> Easton: The Gospel according to St. Luke, p. 49.

Cf. Latham: Pastor Pastorum, pp. 121 ff.

Salmon: The Human Elements in the Gospels, pp. 62 ff.

Jesus is portrayed as an obedient, humble, son of God; while in Mark he is the Strong Son of God. Mark's picture of Jesus during the temptation is that of one who is superior in power to the wild beasts, and is served by angels. This account alone, although it is much briefer and infinitely more modest, would give one something of the impression which one would get from the stories of the temptations of Gautama and Zarathustra. Matthew and Luke had both Mark and "S" before them when they wrote. But their conception of sonship had advanced beyond that of "S". To them the term "son" was equivalent to "Messiah", or it possessed some other unique significance. That they accepted the story is somewhat literal fashion is indicated by the changes that they made in the use of their source. Perhaps they interpreted the incident more in the light of Mark than of "S". They saw in the story a victory of Jesus over Satan, instead of seeing Jesus striving to determine the proper filial attitude which he should adopt. We have assumed much - perhaps too much - in saying what we have about the three synoptists; but we have better evidence when we come to the Fourth Gospel. To John the whole story was impossible. He could not conceive of the Eternal Son of God subjected to a temptation of the devil. Consequently, he took pains to show that there never was such an incident. He accounted for every day of Jesus' life for a period following his coming to John the Baptist, thereby showing that there was no place for a forty days' sojourn in the wilderness. In 1:29 we are



told how Jesus came to John and was immediately recognized as the Lamb of God. The activity of the following day is described in vv. 35-42; and of the second day in vv. 43-51. On the third day Jesus attended the wedding at Cana (2:1 ff.). "After this", according to 2:12, "he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples, and there they abode not many days." 2:13 continues with an account of Jesus' going to Jerusalem for the passover. Consequently, according to the fourth evangelist, Jesus could not have been straightway driven into the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.

It is hardly necessary to add that, in taking the story as essentially historical, we do not have to accept its details as facts. But it was just these details, which offer no problem at all to the modern reader, which were the stumbling-blocks to other generations. We have already seen that many problems confronted those who accepted the narrative as a literal account of an event. As these difficulties arose, ingenious explanations were put forth to meet them. Perhaps the earliest examples of rationalizing are to be found in Matthew and Luke. Faced with the problem of how Jesus could have been "lifted up" to see all the kingdoms of the world, Matthew explained it by saying that the devil took him to "an exceeding high mountain". And Luke, to simplify matters, rearranged the order of the temptations, so that Jesus would not have to travel from the desert to

Jerusalem, and back to the desert. But these were by no means the most serious difficulties. Persons began to wonder if Jesus recognized the devil when he approached; if so, would he have entertained for a moment the suggestions that were proposed? Or how could the devil have hoped to seduce Jesus under such circumstances? In reply, many have supposed, including John Milton and John Wesley, that Satan was disguised as a peasant, or a prince, or an angel. Again, the impossibility of being able to see all the kingdoms of the world, even from the exceeding high mountain, had to be faced; and theories were forthcoming to the effect that Jesus possessed superhuman vision, or that Satan performed a miracle, or that the experience came as a dream or a vision. In addition to these difficulties, there are some slight discrepancies in the two accounts. Unfortunately, the theories that were advanced for settling these problems, if at all successful, were only temporarily so. In the first place, there is no evidence in the gospels to support them; and furthermore, they are themselves fraught with problems more perplexing than the simple scriptural records which they aim to illuminate.

The only way to understand and accept such stories as the temptation is to recognize the literary style in which they are cast. Matthew Arnold said that half the difficulties in the New Testament would vanish if men would only consent not to translate oriental poetry into bald, matter-of-fact western prose. In fact, for those who have not entirely shut out the light of modern thought, the story of

the temptation must be taken either as a myth or as a figurative account of an inner experience. As early as the third century we find scholars taking the latter viewpoint. Origen said: "The same style of scriptural narrative occurs abundantly in the Gospels, as when the devil is said to have placed Jesus on a lofty mountain, that he might show Him from thence all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. How could it literally come to pass, either that Jesus should be led up by the devil into a high mountain, or that the latter should show Him all the kingdoms of the world? .... or how could he show in what manner the kings of these kingdoms are glorified by men? .... In those narratives which appear to be literally recorded, there are inserted and interwoven things which cannot be admitted historically, but which may be accepted in a spiritual signification."<sup>1</sup>

Now this is in perfect accord with what we know about the teaching method of Jesus. We are told that "without a parable spake he not unto them". As Streeter points out, "The aesthetic capacity of the Hebrew race had been concentrated entirely on the art of expression in words; and .... in the one art in which His nation had excelled, Christ showed himself a master."<sup>2</sup> We may mention the following as

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1 De Principiis, IV, 1:16

2 B.H.Streeter: Reality, pp. 204 ff.



characteristics of Jesus' manner of expression: (1) In his words we find examples of every figure of speech - simile, metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, personification, apostrophe, irony, allusion, and the rest. (2) We find a consistent use of concrete expressions to describe abstract truths; e.g., serpents, doves, wolves in sheep's clothing, reed shaken by the wind, are used to designate, respectively, wisdom, harmlessness, false prophets, John. (3) We find frequent quotations from Scripture.<sup>1</sup>

This being the case, what is more reasonable to believe than that Jesus would have described, in essentially such form as we have it, those experiences that were his at the baptism and during the temptation? How else would he have expressed them? It is in perfect accord with his manner of speech for him to describe his spiritual illumination as "the heavens rent asunder", the Spirit of God "as a dove", his assurance of sonship as "a voice from heaven", his impulse to seek solitude in the desert as the activity of the Spirit; that he would express in concrete fashion the thoughts that came to him; that he would use extracts from the Scriptures; and that he would personify those tempting thoughts that arose within him as suggestions of the devil.

If, then, we are to understand the meaning and significance of this incident, we must accept it as Jesus gave it - a vivid, figurative, concrete account of a deep experience.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. H. H. Wendt: The Teaching of Jesus, Vol. 1, pp. 106 ff.

## Chapter VII

## The Meaning of the Term "Son of God"

If we accept the stories of the baptism and temptation as essentially historical, our next problem will be to determine what significance they held for Jesus. The solution of this problem will depend largely upon our interpretation of the term "son of God", for at his baptism Jesus received the assurance that he was God's son, and the temptations hinge upon the condition, "If you are God's son".

In the past this has been considered hardly a problem at all. We have seen that scholars, with few exceptions, have taken the baptism story as the account of Jesus' call to the Messiahship, and the temptation as an account of how he arrived at the nature and method of his Messianic duties. Says one eminent theologian: "We can point to a series of incidents which make it virtually certain that Jesus felt himself to be the Messiah, and declared his consciousness of the fact to others. Proof positive is furnished by the narrative of the temptation, which is meaningless except as related to a preceding Messianic experience."<sup>1</sup> This has been the all but universal opinion.

But the question of Jesus' self-consciousness cannot be answered so easily. It stands at present as an unsolved, if not insoluble, problem. Men have thought that they could know the innermost secrets of his mind in a way that

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1 H. R. Mackintosh: Doctrine of the Person of Christ, p. 15.

they would not dare to claim concerning their contemporaries; but a critical study of the sources, and of early Christianity, will surely shatter such assurance. One is apt to feel that it is a hopeless task to undertake to discover what Jesus thought about himself. Equally able scholars have arrived at diametrically opposed conclusions. The difficulty, of course, arises from the fact that what we have are not biographies, but portraits, of Jesus; and in the drawing of those portraits, our artists have mingled history, legend, apologetics, and primitive Christology.

The problem of Jesus' self-consciousness, however, cannot be simply dismissed as insoluble. It is too vital for that. Nor is it necessary that it should be. It is hardly reasonable to assume a sharp antithesis between the Jesus of history and the Jesus of the gospels. We know what effect Jesus produced upon his associates and his contemporaries. Can we not discover something, at least, about the cause, from the effect? We are told that his enemies called him a blasphemer, and his friends said that he spoke as one having authority. His enemies crucified him as a dangerous radical, and his friends have elevated him to a position to which no other human being has ever been raised. Do not these facts tell us something about him?

It cannot be denied, on the other hand, that our records represent Jesus as saying much more about himself than he actually did say. One has only to compare the Fourth Gospel with Mark and "S" to see that this is true. In John we



find Jesus continually defending himself and teaching men about his own person, while in Mark he even commands the evil spirits, who are able to perceive his divine nature, that they must not reveal him. Case goes so far as to say that in "S" we cannot find "anything to imply that he was a candidate for apocalyptic messianic honors."<sup>1</sup> Be that as it may, even in "S" Jesus is represented as making some great claims for himself. Take, for example, his reply to John's question, his statements about the coming of the Son of Man, his confessing those who confess him, etc. But admitting that our earliest sources do represent him as saying certain things about his person, it cannot be denied that the farther we get away from the historical Jesus the more he is made to say about himself.

Allowing, however, for all the magnifying which our evangelists did, we must admit, unless we deal violently with the sources, that Jesus did make some great claims for himself. Confining ourselves to the best authenticated passages, we find the following to be characteristic of Jesus' teachings:

(1) He appears to have been sure that he knew the will of God. When Peter objected to the way of the cross, Jesus rebuked him for not minding "the things of God" (Mk. 8:33; Mt. 16:23). He told his disciples that God knows of every sparrow that falls to the ground (Mt. 10:29; Lk. 12:6); that he knows their needs before

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<sup>1</sup> S. J. Case: Jesus: A New Biography, pp 393f.

they ask (Mt. 6:8; Lk. 12:30); that he rejoices over one sinner who repents (Lk. 15); that he rewards the sincere and unostentatious (Mt. 6:1ff.); that he gives good gifts to those who ask (Mt. 7:11; Lk. 11:13); that he knows the hearts of men (Lk. 16:15); and that he forgives men as they forgive others (Mk. 11:25; Mt. 6:14).

(2) Jesus spoke of himself as having been "sent", or as having "come" to do a certain work. (Cf. Mk. 10:45 and Mt. 20:28; Mk. 1:38 and Lk. 4:43; Mk. 2:17 and Mt. 9:13 and Lk. 5:32; Mt. 15:24; Lk. 19:10; Mt. 5:17.)

(3) He said some very definite things about the nature of his mission, that he had come to call sinners to repentance (Mk. 2:17; Mt. 9:13; Lk. 5:32), to seek and to save the lost (Lk. 19:10), to be a sign to his generation (Mt. 12:39ff.; Lk. 11:30f.), to minister and to give his life (Mk. 10:45; Mt. 20:28). He himself forgave sins (Mk. 2:5; Mt. 9:2; Lk. 5:20, 7:48), and promised fullness of life to those who would follow him (Mt. 10:39; Lk. 17:33).

(4) Jesus possessed perfect confidence in himself and in his work. He declared that "heaven and earth shall pass away", but not so with his words (Mk. 13:31; Mt. 24:35; Lk. 21:33), and again, "Every one that heareth these words of mine and doeth them shall be likened unto a wise man" (Mt. 7:24; Lk. 13:47f.). When questioned about the source of his authority, he answered in such a way as to imply that it, like John's, was from heaven (Mk. 11:27ff.; Mt. 21:23ff.; Lk. 20:1ff.). In the Beelzebub discourse he said that he

did his work by the "Spirit of God" (Mt. 12:27; Lk. 11:20). He declared that a greater thing than Jonah or Solomon was present (Mt. 12:41f.; Lk. 11:30f.); he pronounced blessed those who found no occasion of stumbling in him (Mt. 11:6; Lk. 7:23), and pronounced woes upon him who should betray him (Mk. 14:21). He made unheard-of demands upon his disciples, and promised rewards and eternal life to those who would lose their lives for his sake (Mt. 10:39 and Lk. 17:33; Mk. 8:35 and Mt. 16:25 and Lk. 9:24; Mk. 13:13 and Mt. 24:13 and Lk. 21:19).

The above passages are sufficient to assure us that Jesus indeed "spake as never man spake", and that he could not have but impressed some as speaking with authority and others as blaspheming. It is not necessary that we bring in the expressions "son of God", "Son of Man", and "Messiah", to reach such conclusions. Jesus himself was not greatly concerned about what men should call him. He did not seek to label himself. He left that to his disciples. Once he said that to call him "Lord" was not the essential thing, but to do the will of God (Mt. 7:21; Lk. 6:46). Would he not say the same thing about the other names and titles that men have given him? These terms were "made for man". They help us to interpret, understand, and evaluate him. But a name that conveys much meaning to one generation will often be an enigma to another. It was so in the past. We see this especially when Christianity passed from the Jews to the Gentiles. Certain titles disappeared, others changed their



meaning, and still others came into existence. But back of these names is Light, Truth, and Reality, and every generation must interpret and understand that Reality in its own way and in its own language.

To his disciples and to the first Christians Jesus was a Revealer and a Redeemer. It is therefore not surprising for us to find that he spoke as he did. A leader worth the following will not be one who speaks in wavering and uncertain terms, but one who speaks with conviction and assurance. Jesus must have possessed such assurance, for he called men to endure hatred, persecution, suffering, and death for his sake - and they obeyed. If men were to find God in him, as they did, he must first of all have been sure of God himself. To produce the effect, therefore, which he did produce upon his closest associates, Jesus must have possessed a revealing, inspiring, redeeming, unique personality. Men now call him divine, but this realization did not come immediately. It took some time for them to discover the fact.

In their effort to understand and interpret such a personality, the first Christians had a number of terms and concepts that they could use. They were familiar with "Logos", "Lord", the deified emperor, "Son of God", "Son of Man", "Messiah", "Wisdom of God", "Servant of Yahweh", "Prophet like unto Moses", and so they applied these terms to Jesus. But in the process they did two things: (1) they changed these concepts so that they would fit Jesus, and (2) they made Jesus fit into the concepts. Concerning "Messiah", for ex-

ample, the popular Jewish conception had to be changed considerably for it to fit the historic Jesus, and this was done; but Jesus' life was also made to fit into the popular conception, and this was done by declaring that he had been born in Bethlehem, that he had been called out of Egypt, and by making him in other ways conform to the prophecies.<sup>1</sup>

To trace the history of these various titles is beyond the scope of this chapter, but brief mention may be made of some of them to show the tendency at work. As regards the identification of Jesus with the Wisdom of God we shall have something to say later when we take up the so-called Johannine passage of the synoptic gospels. But illustrative of the tendency is the case with the term "Son of Man". This expression is found in the synoptic gospels sixty-nine times. Jesus is represented as continually using it in referring to himself. Case says: "Among the Christian communities represented by the gospel tradition there was a pronounced fondness for 'Son of Man' upon the lips of Jesus. Like ... other turns of speech with a liturgical or sacrosanct flavor, the expression was never uttered by anyone else. .... But the assumption that Jesus had put himself forward as the idealized epitome of humanity .... is without historical justification."<sup>2</sup>

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1 Cf. Rawlinson: The New Testament Doctrine of the Christ, pp. 42 ff.

2 S.J. Case, op. cit., pp. 362 ff.

Whether we accept this position, or whether we agree with Bacon, who says that "the 'Son of Man' is Jesus' self-designation, not indeed favorite, as our evangelists would make it, but ultimate"<sup>1</sup>, or however we take it, the fact is that before long the term went out of use. Except for one occurrence in Acts 7:56 it is not to be found in the New Testament outside of the gospels, and Paul seems never to have used it. The probable reason for its disappearance is that it conveyed no intelligible meaning to the Gentiles, who were unfamiliar with its Jewish antecedents.<sup>2</sup>

The case is slightly different with the term "Messiah". To the Jew this would convey a rather definite meaning, although there was never unanimity of opinion as to the details. It has been said, "Messiah was essentially an adjective meaning 'consecrated' or 'appointed by God', and was not the prerogative title of any single person until later than the time of Christ. And so, though the title was undoubtedly applied by the disciples to Jesus, their meaning must be sought from the context in which the word is used."<sup>3</sup> Perhaps this statement goes too far, and we shall return to it later; but at any rate, the term meant something to the Jew. When taken to the Greeks, however,

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1 B.W.Bacon: New and Old in Jesus' Relation to John, in the Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. XLVIII.

2 Cf. A. Deissmann: The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul, pp. 141 ff.

A.J.Rawlinson: op. cit., p. 75.

Lake and Foakes-Jackson: Beginnings of Christianity, Part I, Vol. I, pp. 368 ff.

3 Lake and Foakes-Jackson: op. cit., pp. 345 ff.



it conveyed no such meaning. Consequently, it soon ceased to have any special significance, and became simply another name for Jesus. The same thing happened with the term "Buddha". We see in Acts 2:38, 3:6, 4:10, 9:34, and elsewhere, how "Christ" is used as a proper name, and Paul almost always used it so. Paul was probably following Gentile usage, for he was not the kind to quibble over strange words. Further evidence for this development is found in the writings of Tacitus and Suetonius, where "Christ" is understood as a proper name.

But if "Son of Man" and "Christ" meant nothing to the Gentiles, it was different with "Lord" and "Son of God". Regarding "Lord", Bousset<sup>1</sup> maintains that it was a general divine title in the Hellenistic world, being used for deified emperors, and was characteristic of a number of Hellenized cults; and he believes, therefore, the title was applied to Jesus by the Greeks, and that it could not have occurred before the period of Hellenistic Christianity. On the other hand, we have Paul quoting an Aramaic ejaculation, "Maran atha" ("Our Lord, come"), which apparently was current among Palestinian Christians; and there is much evidence to point to the fact that the consensus of the early faith was expressed in the creed, "Jesus is Lord". (Cf. Romans 10:9; I Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11; Acts 2:36). "Jesus Christ our Lord" and "our Lord Jesus Christ" occur in innumerable passages throughout Paul's letters. The term doubtless ex-

1 W. Bousset: Kyrios Christos, passim.

pressed the conviction of the lordship of Jesus and his claim to allegiance, and at the same time tended to promote a belief in his divinity.

"Son of God" was another term that would convey a meaning to the Gentiles, and serve to express their faith. To them, with their pagan and polytheistic background, the phrase doubtless suggested a supernatural being - supernatural in power, in wisdom, in origin, etc. It is such an interpretation as this that underlies our gospels, and it is necessary that we get back of it in order to determine what the expression signified for Jesus and the disciples. Luke certainly understood "son of God" in this Hellenistic sense, and in 1:26-38 he based the sonship of Jesus upon his supernatural birth. Matthew, too, perhaps had the same idea, but it is not so evident as in Luke. Accordingly, whereas Mark presented the baptism as the occasion when Jesus was notified of his selection as God's son, Matthew and Luke, who had already traced the sonship back to the birth, pictured the baptism as an outward transaction, when the sonship was openly announced to others. But there were dangers in this Gentile environment, where deification was so easy, and where there were "gods many and lords many" (I Cor. 8:5). And so Jesus was declared to be "the son of God", "the only begotten son of God", "the beloved son", "who was declared to be the son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). Paul insists that "though

there be that are called gods ....., yet to us there is one God, the Father, ..... and one Lord, Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 8:5f.).

Paul, however, did not limit the term "son" to Jesus, nor did he take it to imply a physical relationship, as Luke appears to have done. Paul has nothing to say about the miraculous birth of Jesus, but traces his unique sonship to the resurrection. This, probably, was the Petrine doctrine also, judging by Acts 2:36, where Jesus is declared, by the resurrection, to have been "made" both "Lord and Christ". However, Paul does refer to Jesus as "the son" on a number of occasions, implying a special and unique relationship to God. (Cf. I Thess. 1:10; Gal. 1:16, 2:20, 4:4,6; II Cor. 1:19; Rom. 1:3,4,9; 5:10, 8:29, 32; Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:13.) At the same time Paul applies the term in a more general way, declaring that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14); that "ye are all sons of God, through faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:26); that God has "foreordained us unto adoption as sons" (Eph. 1:5); and that "thou art no longer a bond-servant, but a son" (Gal. 4:7). (Cf., also, II Cor. 6:18; Gal. 4:5,6; Rom 8:16f.,21; 9:26; Eph. 5:1). In this latter sense Paul approaches what, as we shall see, was the Jewish usage at the time of Jesus.

It seems, therefore, that there were three connotations which the expression "son of God" might have taken. (1) It might have meant a physical relationship - divinity due to



supernatural origin. (2) It might have meant a metaphysical relationship to God, implying that one occupied an unique position with God, by reason of having been chosen, or manifested, or exalted. (3) It might have meant a purely religious and ethical relationship existing between God, the Father, and man, his child. Our problem is now to determine whether or not the expression was used by Jesus and his associates, and, if so, in what sense.

"Son of God" and kindred terms are found in the Old Testament in the following connections:

(1) To designate angels or demigods. Genesis 6:2 reads, "The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and took them wives of all that they chose"; and 6:4 continues, "When the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, .. they bare children to them". A similar use of the term is found in Job 1:6, where we find, "The sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah"; likewise, in Job 2:1, 38:7, and Psalm 29:1.

(2) To refer to judges and rulers, as in Psalm 82:6.

(3) To denote the king of Israel. II Sam. 7:14 declares, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son." Ps. 2:7, in speaking of the king on his coronation day, says, "I will tell of the decree; Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." Ps. 89:27 likewise is written about the king, "I will make him my first-born, the highest of the kings of the earth." [Ps. 2 has been used

as the principal Scriptural basis for seeing in the term "son of God" a Messianic title. (Cf., e.g., W. Sanday's article, "Son of God", in Hastings' Bible Dictionary.) But Dalman presents convincing evidence to uphold his belief that Psalm 2 was "not of decisive importance in the Jewish conception of the Messiah, and 'son of God' was not a common Messianic title."<sup>1</sup> ]

(4) To refer to the nation. This is how the term is most often used. Ex. 4:22 reads: "Thus saith Jehovah, Israel is my son, my first-born." See, also, Hos. 1:10 and 11:1; and cf. Dt. 1:31, 8:5, 14:1; Is. 1:2, 30:1; Mal. 1:6.

We may say, then, that in the Old Testament the term "son of God", except in a few very early and primitive passages, is used to designate the Israelitish nation; and where it is used for the king or other officials, it is applied to them as leaders or representatives of the nation. In the Old Testament, Israel is God's son.

The expression occurs also in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. It is found in IV Esdras 7:28f.; 13:32, 37, 52; 14:9, where it is used as a Messianic title. But inasmuch as the Aramaic original of this book is lost, and the extant versions have passed through Christian hands and suffered many changes, we cannot place great weight upon these passages.<sup>2</sup> Then too, the fact that IV Esdras

1 Dalman: The Words of Jesus, pp. 268ff.  
Cf. G.H.Box: The Ezra-Apocalypse, pp. lvi f.

2 Cf. N.Schmidt: The Prophet of Nazareth / pp. 15ff.  
Strack-Billerbeck: Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, III,  
G.H.Box: op. cit., pp. lvi f.  
S.J.Case: op. cit., pp. 361 f.

There are several occurrences of the expression in the Wisdom of Solomon. In 9:7, 12:21, 16:10, 18:4,13, it is used in referring to the nation, just as it is used in the Old Testament. In 2:10ff. we find a passage that bears a striking resemblance to the story of Jesus' temptation:

"Let us oppress the righteous poor man, ...  
Let our might be our law of right. ...  
He declareth that he hath knowledge of God,  
And calleth himself the child of God. ...  
Let us see if his words be true. ...  
For if the righteous man be God's son, He will  
uphold him,  
And will deliver him from the hand of his  
adversaries."

Here we have righteousness, even suffering righteousness, and knowledge of God, named as the characteristics of sonship. The idea that the good man is a son of God is found also in Eccles. 4:10, where, following a series of admonitions to the practice of charity, we read:

1 Cf. Schmidt: op. cit., p. 144.  
Dalman: op. cit., p. 269.  
Box: op. cit., pp. lvi f.



"Be as a father unto the fatherless,  
And instead of a husband unto their mother:  
So shalt thou be a son of the Most High,  
And he shall love thee more than thy mother doth."

The term is used similarly by Philo. He says: "These men .... display a perfect ignorance of the one Creator and Father of all things; but they who have real knowledge are properly addressed as the sons of the one God, as Moses also entitles them, where he says, 'Ye are the sons of the Lord God' (Dt. 14:1). And again, 'God who begot thee' (Dt. 32:18); and in another place, 'Is not he thy Father?' (Dt. 32:6). ... For even if we are not yet suitable to be called sons of God, still we may deserve to be called the children of his eternal image, of his most sacred word."<sup>1</sup> Philo says further: "The law .... says that those who do what is pleasing to nature and virtuous are the sons of God, for it says, 'Ye are the sons of the Lord your God' (Dt. 14:1), inasmuch as you will be thought worthy of his providence and care in your behalf as though he were your father."<sup>2</sup>

Let us see now how the expression is used in the synoptic gospels. "Son of God", "the Son", "Son of the Most High", and the like, are found in the following connections:

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1 On the Confusion of Languages, 28.

2 On Those Who Offer Sacrifice, 11.

- Lk. 1:32 - "He shall be called the son of the Most High."
- Lk. 1:35 - "The holy thing .. shall be called the son  
of God."
- Mk. 1:1 - "The gospel of Jesus Christ, the son of God."
- Mt. 3:17 - "This is my beloved son."  
Mk. 1:11 - "Thou art my beloved son."  
Lk. 3:22 - "Thou art my beloved son."
- Mt. 4:3,6 - "If thou art God's son."  
Lk. 4:3,9 - "If thou art God'sson."
- Mk. 3:11 - "Thou art the son of God."  
Lk. 4:41 - "Thou art the son of God."
- Mt. 5:9 - "The peacemakers ... shall be called sons of God."
- Mt. 5:45 - "Love your enemies ... that ye may be sons of  
your Father."
- Lk. 6:35 - "Love your enemies and ye shall be sons of  
the Most High."
- Mt. 11:27 - "No one knoweth the son save the Father, etc."  
Lk. 10:22 - "No one knoweth who the son is save the  
Father, etc."
- Mt. 8:29 - "Thou son of God."  
Mk. 5:7 - "Thou son of the Most High God."  
Lk. 8:28 - "Thou son of the Most High God."
- Mt. 14:33 - "Thou art the son of God."
- Mt. 14:33 - "The son of the living God."
- Mt. 17:5 - "This is my beloved son."  
Mk. 9:7 - "This is my beloved son."  
Lk. 9:35 - "This is my son, my chosen."
- Mt. 24:36 - "But of that day and hour knoweth no one,  
neither the son."
- Mk. 13:32 - "But of that day or that hour knoweth no one,  
neither the son."
- Lk. 20:36 - "They are equal unto the angels, and are sons  
of God."

Mt. 26:63 - "Tell us whether thou art the Christ, the  
son of God."

Mk. 14:61 - "Art thou the Christ, the son of the Blessed?"

Lk. 22:70 - "Art thou, then, the son of God?"

Mt. 27:40 - "If thou art the son of God."

Mt. 27:43 - "He said, I am the son of God."

Mt. 27:54 - "Truly this man was the son of God."

Mk. 15:39 - "Truly this man was the son of God."

Cf. Lk. 23:47 - "Certainly this was a righteous man."

Mt. 28:19 - "Go ... baptizing ... into the name of the Father  
and of the son."

These words were spoken by angels, the voice from heaven, evil spirits, demoniacs, Satan, Peter, the disciples in the boat, the high priest, the elders, the people around the cross, the centurion at the cross, and by Jesus himself. But Jesus is reported as having used the term only six times: (1) in referring to the peacemakers; (2) in speaking of those who love their enemies; (3) in describing the sons of the resurrection; (4) in the "Hymn of Thanksgiving"; (5) in the statement that not even the son knows the day and hour of the coming of the Son of Man; and (6) in the commission to baptize.

The last of these is without doubt of late date. The Markan parallel mentions neither the baptism nor the three persons of the Trinity. This is certainly not an authentic saying of Jesus. Another is that wherein Jesus states that neither the angels nor the son know the day and hour of the coming of the Son of Man. The source for this is Mark, and



Matthew took it over, but Luke did not. The Lukan parallel for this statement is found in Acts 1:7, "It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority." The chief obstacle to accepting the statement precisely as Matthew and Mark give it is the fact that this whole apocalyptic section has, quite obviously, suffered at the hands of editors, so that we cannot be sure either than the context or the words have been preserved. Again, in this passage, where Jesus declares that there are certain limitations to the son's knowledge, we have what is, to say the least, a poor foundation upon which to built the theory that Jesus used the term "son" to denote such uniqueness of which he was conscious. Finally, it is not necessary to assume that Jesus meant himself alone when he used "son" in this instance. Perhaps he was using it with the same significance as when he referred to the fact that the kings collect tribute, not from their sons, but from strangers. (Mt. 17:24ff.) Perhaps he meant that not even God's sons know the day and the hour. Such an attitude was characteristic of Jesus. Jesus did not care to pry into the divine mysteries; he was content to trust God in matters which he believed were beyond man's scope.

The reference to the sons of the resurrection in Lk. 20:36 is perhaps an editorial addition. Mark is the source for this, and he does not mention "sons of God."

We must next consider what is perhaps the most difficult passage in the synoptic gospels - the so-called Johannine

section of Mt. 11:27ff. and Lk. 10:22ff. There are differences in the two accounts. In Matthew it is placed immediately after the reply to the question brought by John's disciples, and after Jesus has pronounced woes upon the cities of Galilee; but in Luke it is found following the return of the seventy, when they reported that "even the demons were subject" unto them. Matthew's account, too, is longer than Luke's. In Matthew there are three thoughts expressed: (1) the babes, and not the wise, receive the divine mysteries, (2) the son is the means of revelation, and (3) the appeal to men to take the yoke and find peace. Luke gives only the first two. This is strange, and indicates that the last strophe did not stand in "S", for Luke was too interested in the poor and outcast to have omitted the "come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden."

This is obviously the language of Divine Wisdom. But how shall we connect it with Jesus? In Lk. 11:49 we read that Jesus said, "Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send unto them prophets and apostles." This is found also in Mt. 23:34, but Matthew has omitted the clause which makes this a quotation from Wisdom, and makes it a statement from Jesus. Luke is more likely following "S". Perhaps Jesus was familiar with the wisdom literature, and if he quoted it on one occasion, he perhaps quoted it elsewhere. Furthermore, the portrait of Jesus which the author of "S" has drawn, represents Jesus as the redeeming Wisdom of God. Paul, also, was fond of identifying Jesus with the Wisdom

of God. In I Cor. 1:24 he says, "We preach Christ crucified, ... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God," and in Col. 2:2f. he expresses the wish "that they may know the mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures <sup>the</sup> of/wisdom of God." (Cf. Rom. 11:33, Eph. 3:10, 1:17, I Cor. 1 - 2.) Thus, in view of the testimony of "S" and of Paul, it seems that in the early church there was an interest in identifying Jesus with the Wisdom of God. It is not unreasonable to assume that a similar process went on here to that which occurred with the Messianic concept, that is, Jesus was made to fit the concept, and, on the other hand, sections of wisdom literature were ascribed to Jesus. This is not to deny that Jesus himself used that literature.

And so, as regards the authenticity of this Johannine section, there are three possibilities. (1) It is possible that Jesus uttered these words as they are recorded, that they were original with him, and that he applied them to himself. This is the position of Wendt, who writes: "Jesus on certain occasions designated Himself in distinction from all others as 'the Son of God', in a pre-eminent sense. ... From the context it is clear that He means Himself as the Son of God, who was perfectly known and understood in His character only by God, as He on His part knew the Father as to character in a unique way."<sup>1</sup> Dalman writes in a similar way: "Jesus never applied to Himself the title 'Son of God', and yet made it indubitably clear that He was

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1 H.H.Wendt: The Teaching of Jesus, Vol. II, pp. 125f.



not merely 'a' but 'the Son of God'. ... The peculiar relation of Jesus to God is one that cannot be transmitted to others or be subject to change. His disciples, indeed, through His means attain to the same knowledge of God that He Himself possessed. But their knowledge is derived through a medium, while His is acquired by direct intuition. ... Nowhere do we find that Jesus called Himself the Son of God in a sense as to suggest merely a religious and ethical relation to God - a relation which others also actually possessed, or which they were capable of attaining or destined to acquire."<sup>1</sup>

(2) Another possibility is that Jesus made this statement, that he was either quoting or speaking spontaneously, but that he was not referring to himself in an exclusive or unique sense. This is the position of Bacon, who writes: "All the affinities of the passage make it a protest against the spiritual disinheritance of the common people at the hands of the professional religionist. Therefore it is impossible to suppose that Jesus is speaking of a revelation or a sonship which is his in an exclusive sense. He speaks of himself simply as the leader and champion of those who have no claims to sonship but the ethical. ... And so, to the scribes' contention that no man can claim to be a son who does not 'know' the God whom he claims as his Father, and who has no revelation of his will, reply is made by Jesus that the little ones, whom he welcomes as his brother, and

<sup>1</sup> Dalman: The Words of Jesus, pp. 280 ff.

sister, and mother, because they hear the word of God and do it, have a better and fuller knowledge than the wise and understanding. It is God's pleasure that knowledge of himself is not intellectually, but morally, conditioned. It is the son who is competent to give revelation of the Father. .... We give small notice to this humble title 'son of God' except when the translators assist our vision with a capital letter, or when in some way its simple ethical sense is transcended. ... Jesus applies [this term] to himself only as a representative, leader, and champion of those whose sonship required to be vindicated. ... Jesus is the 'son', but only as 'the first-born of many brethren'. This sense is as little theocratic as it is metaphysical. It is historic, ethical, and religious."<sup>1</sup>

(3) A third possibility is that these words were placed on Jesus' lips by his followers. According to Lake and Foakes-Jackson, "It is very improbable that it is an accurate representation of the mind of Jesus, or of the earliest Christian thought, for nowhere else in the earliest strata does Jesus appear as revealing God to those who are ignorant of him, nor was that the message of the disciples to the Jews. It does, however, exactly reflect the attitude of the earliest Greek Christianity, such as is found in Paul's speech at Athens. It is therefore not impossible that these rhythmical verses, which sound so

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1 B.W.Bacon: Jesus the Son of God, pp. 13 ff.

liturgical, represent an early Greek Christian utterance which has found its way into the Greek 'Q' used by Matthew and Luke."<sup>1</sup>

Of these three positions, which are fairly typical of the many opinions that have been expressed regarding this passage, the first is the least likely to be correct. It is inconceivable that Jesus went through Galilee and Judea talking about himself as he is here represented. It was his desire to direct men's thoughts and allegiance to God rather than to himself. It is more likely that either Jesus quoted from the wisdom literature with some such aim as Professor Bacon supposes or these words were ascribed to him by his followers. In view of the fact<sup>that</sup>/Luke does not have the third strophe, which would certainly have appealed to the charitable and sympathetic physician as nothing else in Jesus' teaching would have, the present writer believes that some such solution as the following is the most plausible: This hymn was composed before the time of Jesus to apply either to the chosen people, Israel, or to the wise and righteous son of God. Some early Christian, perhaps the author of "S", who saw in Jesus the embodiment of the Divine Wisdom, placed this passage upon his lips. This writer recorded only the first two strophes - only these two were in "S" - and Luke took them over. But the first evangelist, who was familiar with the hymn, added the third strophe.

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1 The Beginnings of Christianity, Part I, Vol. I, pp. 395f.  
Cf. A.E.J. Rawlinson: The New Testament Doctrine of the Christ.



In Mt. 5:9 we have, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God." In the Lukan beatitudes this is not found, and it is possible, therefore, that Matthew has added it. But whether Matthew or Luke has been more faithful in transmitting this section of "S" is, of course, an open question. However, there is no particular reason why Matthew would have added such a remark as this, nor is there any reason why Luke would have omitted it. The statement certainly sounds like Jesus, and there can be no objection to accepting it as authentic. It cannot be doubted that we have an authentic passage in Mt. 5:44 and Lk. 6:35, Luke's version of which reads: "Love your enemies and do them good, and lend, never despairing, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High, for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil."

It seems, therefore, that neither before the time of Jesus, nor by Jesus himself, was the term "son of God" used in a Messianic or otherwise unique sense. But the gospels record several instances when Jesus was called "the son of God", so that there arises the possibility that, although he did not use the term as a title or a designation for himself, he did allow others to do so. All of these instances, however, are subject to grave suspicion. Matthew seems to have been particularly fond of using the expression, and often added it when it was not in his source. For example, in telling about Jesus' walking on the sea, Matthew says that those in the boat "worshipped him, saying, Of a

truth thou art the Son of God." But his source, Mark, merely states that "they were sore amazed in themselves." Again, on the occasion of Peter's confession, Matthew reports that Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Luke says, "The Christ of God", and Mark, "Thou art the Christ." Luke seems to have based Jesus' sonship upon his divine generation and descent, as indicated in the proclamation of the angel in 1:26-38. It is hardly necessary to dwell upon the unhistorical character of this story, nor that of the transfiguration as it now stands. Then there are instances when the demoniacs and the evil spirits proclaimed Jesus "the son of God". Mark is the source for these stories, and Matthew and Luke have followed him. According to Mark it was Jesus' desire to keep his Messiahship, or his divinity, a secret; and although he could conceal it from men, he could not keep it from the members of the spirit world. Such supernatural knowledge on the part of demons and demented persons was entirely in accord with the beliefs of that age, but today one becomes suspicious of stories of that character, and is inclined to question their historical accuracy. The expression in Mt. 27:40,43, can be explained as the editor's additions, for neither is found in Mark.

Then there is the statement of the centurion at the cross. In Mark the words are: ἀληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἀνθρώπος  
υἱὸς ἡν Θεοῦ. Matthew follows this closely. Luke, however, gives, "Certainly this was a righteous man."

If these words are historical, what could the centurion have meant? That he meant "Messiah" is exceedingly unlikely, inasmuch as "son of God" was an unfamiliar, if not entirely unknown, Mōssianic title. It would be surprising to find a pagan centurion who was conversant with Jewish theological terminology. Perhaps he meant "righteous", as Luke probably thought; or perhaps the conduct of Jesus, or his unusually speedy release from suffering, convinced him that this man was divine in some heathen sense which is unimportant for our present discussion.<sup>1</sup>

Regarding the use of the term at the trial of Jesus, it should be noted that the first question asked, according to Luke, was, "If thou art the Christ, tell us." Mark has, "Art thou the Christ, the son of the Blessed?" Matthew gives, "I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the son of God." As a matter of fact, we have no authentic information as to what occurred at the trial of Jesus, and it is difficult to determine just what the charge was that caused Jesus to be condemned. It is not impossible to account for the death of Jesus, even assuming that he never set himself up as Messiah. And there is certainly some evidence to support the view that the Messiahship of Jesus dated from the resurrection, (Cf. Acts 2:36; Rom. 1:4), and that the first Christians based their doctrines of his person, not upon

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. N. Schmidt: The Prophet of Nazareth, p. 150.



things that Jesus had said, but upon the experiences of Peter, Paul, and others, which came after Jesus' death.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, one has to handle the records carelessly in order to hold that Jesus never professed to be the Messiah. It is much easier to account for the resurrection experiences by accepting the testimony of the gospels that Jesus had previously claimed to be the Messiah, than to believe that Jewish disciples would designate as Messiah one who had been crucified, dead, and buried. Then what is to be done with such facts as Peter's confession, the request of James and John, the entry into Jerusalem, Jesus' reference to the temple, the trial, the inscription on the cross, etc.? We shall approach this investigation of the trial, then, with the assumption that Jesus, sometime during his ministry, applied to himself, or allowed others to do so, the term "Messiah". That he did not accept it with its popular implications is obvious; but he did change the concept and adopt it for himself. That he took it as a title we cannot believe; but that he accepted it because he believed that he fulfilled essentially what the term denoted, it seems difficult to deny.

At the trial there were many charges that might have been, perhaps were, brought against Jesus. It is likely that the incident of the cleansing of the temple was taken up. We are told that Jesus' remark about the destruction of the temple was brought out by the witnesses. Jesus remained silent, and then the High Priest directed the question to Jesus,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. W. Wrede: Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien.

A. Schweitzer: Das Messianitäts- und Leidensgeheimnis.

"Art thou the Messiah?" Regarding the actual words of the question Klausner says: "Mark here adds the words, 'the Son of the Blessed'. This is not a Hebrew expression and must be a later addition. ... Matthew records the question in more solemn form. ... The oath is possible, but the words 'Son of God', from the mouth of a Jewish High Priest, and particularly from a Sadducee, are inconceivable."<sup>1</sup> The question essentially pertains to the Messianic claim of Jesus. When these accounts were written, with their Gentile background, "son of God" had come to have an unique connotation which it did not have at the time of Jesus. Gentile readers would understand the charge of blasphemy which was brought against Jesus if he had set himself up as God's son, whereas they would not had he only claimed to be the Messiah. All that subsequently happened could have followed upon Jesus' merely answering the High Priest's question in the affirmative. For a carpenter from Nazareth to call himself "Messiah" would, to the High Priest, have been tantamount to blasphemy, and at the same time it would involve a case for Pilate to handle. When he was taken before Pilate it was explained that he had been found guilty of assuming the rôle of Messiah, i.e., the "King of the Jews", and he was accordingly condemned for "stirring up the people".

On the basis of the evidence given above, we take the position, therefore, that "son of God" was not a Messianic

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1 Joseph Klausner: Jesus of Nazareth, pp. 339 ff.

title in the time of Jesus, and could not have carried any Messianic connotation. We have seen that except in the lone case of Enoch 105:2, the genuineness of which is suspected, the term was never used for the Messiah until after the crucifixion. In pre-Christian writings it always meant either the nation of Israel or some particularly favored individual - the king or a righteous man. In the wisdom literature the expression occurs several times, where the good man who knows his God and who practises righteousness and mercy is designated as God's son. When we come to the gospels we find that in all probability the expression was never used by any associate of Jesus in referring to him in an unique sense, and certainly not in a Messianic sense, nor did Jesus so apply it to himself. In the most authentic passage that we have, Jesus says: "Love your enemies and do them good, and lend, never despairing, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High; for He is kind toward the unthankful and evil. Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful." Jesus, who, according to "S", was familiar with the wisdom literature, uses the expression in somewhat the same connection that it is used in that literature. That is, he uses it purely in a religious and ethical sense, and not with any physical or metaphysical or otherwise unique connotations. To Jesus a son of God is primarily one who possesses inner moral likeness to God, one who is loving, generous, kind, and merciful, "even as your Father is." This presupposes that one must know the Father whom he is to



imitate; and such character finds its reward in winning God's love and approval and in being a son - "your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons." Paul has this idea, too, when he writes that the sons of God are those who are led by the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:14).

The purpose of this discussion has been to show that it is incorrect to take the term "son of God" as a synonym for "Messiah" in the interpretation of the stories of the baptism and temptation. If we accept these narratives as historical, and believe that Jesus related them in words not very different from those that we have, we shall still fail to gain their true significance if we insist upon reading into them interpretations which were not there in the time of Jesus, but which subsequent generations have placed upon them. What we are maintaining, in a word, is that when the tempter said, "If you are God's son," he meant simply that and not something else; he did not mean, "If you are the Messiah", or "If you are divine". The burden of proof really lies upon those who take the latter position.

Let us say, then, that in the mind of Jesus a son of God is one who knows God as his Father, who seeks to imitate God and to be like him in spirit and in deed, and who, in so doing, wins God's approval and attains his own highest happiness. Men have to become sons, and they have to pray and strive and sacrifice to do so; but to be a son of God is one's greatest privilege - the pearl of great price. Let us take "son of God" in this religious and ethical sense, and approach

the baptism and temptation in that light.

It is generally believed that at the baptism Jesus received his call to the Messianic office, and Mark perhaps understood it in that way. But to Matthew and Luke Jesus' Messiahship dated from his birth, and the phenomena of the baptism therefore served as a public announcement of the fact. This is brought out in Matthew, where the voice is directed, not to Jesus, but to John; and in Luke, where we are told that the Spirit came "in bodily form".

We may be sure, however, that the baptism account relates an inner experience of Jesus, and not an outward transaction. If we accept literally the story that the heavens were opened and a voice spoke audibly either to Jesus or to those present, the subsequent course of Jesus' ministry becomes a tremendous problem. Why, then, did John's disciples not follow him? Why did John send the messengers to him? Furthermore, our records do not permit us to assume that this was other than an inner experience. Although there was doubtless an account of the baptism in "S", the narrative of Mark takes us as near to the event as we can get. According to Mark it was Jesus who saw the heavens rent asunder, and the Spirit descending upon him; and the voice came to him. If we had only Mark as a source of information, it would hardly occur to us that this was other than an experience for Jesus. It is in Matthew, Luke, and John that we see the incident described as external. What has been said about the literary style of the temptation story applies also to this

account of the baptism - i.e., Jesus described this inner experience to his disciples in language that was vivid, concrete, and figurative.

That this was Jesus' call to the Messiahship is most unlikely. The essence of the experience is that Jesus became assured that he was God's beloved son; and we have seen that "son of God" was not a Messianic title, nor did Jesus himself, nor any of his associates, so employ it. Therefore it could not have had a Messianic connotation for Jesus on this occasion. Furthermore, it should be noted that the narrative differs from those relating the calls of other religious leaders. Bundy maintains that Jesus' experience differs from that of other prophets (1) in that it includes no personal call to a definite task, and no personal response, and (2) in that it does not seem to have the importance for Jesus that such experiences have for others.<sup>1</sup> Compare it, for example, with the call of Moses, or that of Isaiah, and the points of difference are apparent.

Another significant fact, which we shall return to later, is that according to Mark 1:14 and Matthew 4:12, it was not until after John was delivered up that Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel. Now if he had received his call to the Messiahship at the baptism, why did he - indeed, how could he - wait until after John was arrested to begin his work? Does it not appear that John's arrest, rather than the baptism experience, was the stimulus that sent Jesus into public life?

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1 W.E.Bundy: Article in the Journal of Religion, Jan., 1927.



Matthew says that it was "when Jesus heard that John was cast into prison," Mark says "after", and Luke has nothing to say about the relationship. We know that the first Christians were very reluctant to admit that Jesus was at all dependent upon John; and we know also, from Jesus' own words, that John had a great influence upon him.<sup>1</sup> The view is tenable, therefore, that Jesus entered public life as John's successor, to carry on a work that had been unjustly interrupted.

This interpretation of events does not in any way minimize the importance of the baptism experience for Jesus. His sonship consciousness was basic for, and indeed led to, his Messianic consciousness, and we shall discuss this point later. But, at the same time, his sonship consciousness did not make him feel unique in any sense, or different from other men, but rather made him one with them. The assurance of being God's son was an illuminating and inspiring experience for Jesus. And, too, his conception of sonship involves a serving, self-giving attitude, and places upon one the responsibility of sharing with others, and leading them into, such knowledge and experience. But, significant as his baptism doubtless was, there is no reason for believing that it constituted a call to the Messiahship. Warschauer says that Jesus could not have received his consciousness of Messiahship at the baptism. It was believed that Elijah must

1 Cf. B.W.Bacon: New and Old in Jesus' Relation to John, in The Journal of Biblical Literature, Parts I and II, Vol. XLVIII, 1929.

first come (Mk. 9:11 and Mal. 4:5); and the popular picture of the Messiah was a blend of a descendant of David, who should drive out the foreigner and revive the Hebrew monarchy, and of the Son of Man, a celestial being, who should come with the clouds of heaven. Warschauer therefore holds that it is psychologically impossible that one who had lived the life of an obscure Galilean artisan, should identify himself with such a figure.<sup>1</sup>

Just what the words addressed to Jesus were is an open question. The bulk of testimony favors the reading of Mark, "Thou art my son, in thee I am well pleased." There is another form, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee," which is found in a number of manuscripts and in some Latin and Greek sources. The former reading has been accounted for by the fact that Christians desired to date the Messiahship of Jesus earlier than his baptism; and the latter by the fact that there was a tendency to reproduce the words of Psalm 2. The present reading of Mark is probably the original, which was altered to agree with the Psalm. Possibly Mark did not see any reference to the Old Testament, and simply recorded the words as a fact. From Acts 13:33 we get the impression that the early church saw in the resurrection, and not in the baptism, the fulfilment of the prophecy of the second Psalm.

It is unlikely also that Jesus saw an Old Testament quotation in the words. The words of the heavenly voice

<sup>1</sup> J. Warschauer: The Historical Life of Christ, pp. 44ff.

bear only a slight resemblance to Psalm 2. The Psalm does not have "beloved", and does not say, "In thee I am well pleased." "Son" is the only respect in which they are alike. Furthermore, Jesus' life is a complete contradiction of the promises and sentiments of the Psalm. One has to press the analogy equally hard to make the words of the voice reflect Isaiah 42:1ff. It is doubtful that either of these passages was being inaccurately quoted by the voice from heaven. The essential nature of the experience is that Jesus is assured that he is God's beloved son, in the ethical and religious sense which the term conveyed at the time. What was there in John's baptism that would suddenly assure a Galilean carpenter that he was the Jewish Messiah? For such a thing to have happened, we need almost assume the audible voice and the other miraculous phenomena! But that one should experience the love of the Father, the possession of his Spirit, the feeling of sonship, are not inconceivable consequences of baptism. This is what the early Christians found in baptism, for baptism was a rite of adoption by the Spirit of God, which, in the words of Paul, "testifies with our spirit that we are born of God," or, in which they "received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Rom. 8:14ff.) Again, Paul says, "As many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ..... God sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts crying, Abba, Father." (Gal. 3:27 - 4:7) The correspondence between the baptism experiences of the early Christians and that of Jesus is so



close that Bacon, who does not accept these accounts of Jesus' baptism and temptation as historical, says: "Primitive Christians conceived of Jesus' baptism as involving all that was involved in their own, and more. They were endowed at baptism with various 'gifts of the Spirit,' the 'word of knowledge,' and the 'word of power.' Jesus too experienced this endowment with the Spirit of adoption; only (as one ancient gospel expressed it) the 'whole fountain' of the Holy Spirit, and not mere derived rivulets, 'descended and dwelt in him'."<sup>1</sup> But why not take it the other way, and say that the early Christians derived from their baptism what Jesus was known to have derived from his? Especially is this reasonable in view of the fact that we have an account of Jesus' baptism which, for several reasons, bears the stamp of genuineness. This narrative has been studied by one - a psychologist, and not a Biblical critic - who interprets it as follows: "It is a feeling of perfect communion with the Spirit of God, a sudden illumination, the profound and henceforth inalienable certitude of being in a filial relation to the Father."<sup>2</sup>

We take the position, then, that at his baptism Jesus became peculiarly aware of God's nearness and love, and assured that he stood in relation to God as a beloved son to a loving Father. Such an experience was similar to that which he possessed at the age of twelve, when he was found

<sup>1</sup> B.W.Bacon: The Story of Jesus, pp. 139f.

<sup>2</sup> Georges Berguer: Some Aspects of the Life of Jesus, pp.156ff.

in the temple, but was infinitely greater in intensity and certitude.

## Chapter VIII

## The First and Second Temptations

We take the position, therefore, that Jesus was tempted as a son of God, and not as the Messiah. The following are the chief objections to the Messianic interpretation:

(1) "Son of God", in all probability, did not have a Messianic connotation for Jesus. At his baptism he became assured that he was a son of God, and he immediately sought the solitude of the wilderness to meditate upon the meaning of the experience. But this was not a call to the Messiahship.

(2) It is quite probable that Jesus did not conceive of himself as the Messiah until the latter part of his public ministry. If we accept this view, as many scholars have done, the Messianic interpretation is, of course, precluded.

(3) The Messianic interpretation has to be pressed unduly in order to make it fit the three temptations. For example, most of those who say that Jesus was tempted as the Messiah, maintain that the suggestion that he leap from the temple was a temptation to proclaim himself, and to establish his Messiahship, by performing a dazzling feat in the presence of the multitude. But there is no mention of a multitude in the story, and there is no evidence that this is what it signified for Jesus. Likewise with the first suggestion, that he turn the stone into a loaf, it is said that he was tempted to fulfil the popular expectation that



the Messiah would provide material blessings for the people, which is by no means implied in the words. Jesus is hungry, and the temptation comes to him. The third is the only one which easily adapts itself to the Messianic interpretation, and even this temptation, as we shall see, does not demand it.

(4) Especially important is the fact that the temptations, and the replies, are not taken from the Messianic passages of the Old Testament. Psalm 91, which presents a temptation to Jesus, is not a Messianic psalm. Jesus' replies to the tempter are taken from Deuteronomy 6 and 8, wherein is described the relationship between God and His son, Israel. If Jesus had been thinking at this time of the Messiah and his task, it would seem that the temptations and the replies would reflect more clearly those portions of Scripture which deal with such subjects. But it is obvious that the thoughts that were uppermost in Jesus' mind on this occasion were those suggested by Deuteronomy 6-8, and by Psalm 91.

We shall arrive most likely at the correct interpretation of this story, therefore, if we assume that at his baptism Jesus had a simple, but vivid and assuring, experience of sonship. But what does it mean to be God's son? What does such a relationship imply? This is the problem that came to Jesus' mind, and he retired into the solitude of the desert to ponder it. We can well believe that he was so intent upon it that he became oblivious to his bodily needs, and "ate nothing" during those days. Quite naturally

his thoughts would turn to the Scriptures for light.

The first two temptations may be treated together. They represent symbolically the temptations, first, to expect from God material blessings on the basis of sonship, and secondly, to expect special and unique protection. We are told that after some time Jesus "began to feel hungry", and his hunger presented a problem to his mind. If he were a son of God should he want for food? Should he want for any of the necessities, or even the comforts and luxuries, of life? Could not, and therefore should not, the Creator and Ruler of the world provide for his children, if they were indeed His beloved sons? Would He not actually turn the stones of the wilderness into bread in order to satisfy their bodily needs? The second is similar to this. If he were God's son, would not God protect him against the dangers of life? Psalm 91 declares that He is the refuge and fortress of the righteous man. Him will he deliver from deadly pestilence, from the terrors by night, from destruction, from lions and adders, and from the darts of the enemy. God will "give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." What could be more specific and assuring? Does sonship mean that God will give to one material blessings, prosperity, comfort, and special protection from the dangers and hardships of life? These are the problems which Jesus had to face.

Professor Paterson, in one of his Gifford Lectures, shows how widespread and persistent such problems have been

in the realm of religion. Says he: "It has been the most prominent and persistent conception of the function of religion that under the care of, or in alliance with, the Divine Being, man enjoys protection against the worst of the evils by which he is afflicted and menaced, and advances to the possession of the best blessings to which he can aspire."<sup>1</sup> In the same chapter he gives a table of values with which religion has been concerned:

- |              |   |  |
|--------------|---|--|
| 1. Physical  | - | health, and length of days.                |
| 2. Social    | - | wealth, power, honor, kindred and friends. |
| 3. Emotional | - | blessedness.                               |
| 4. Spiritual | - | (a) General - truth, beauty, goodness      |
|              |   | (b) God, and gifts of grace.               |

We must now turn aside to see how this problem was treated by the Hebrews, in order to see the background against which Jesus' temptations took place.

Much thought was given in Hebrew religion to the practical relationship between God and his chosen ones. It was in the realm of such practical problems that the Hebrew mind dwelt, rather than in that of the more abstract and speculative. The writers of the Old Testament had much to say about the suffering of the righteous - individual and nation - and the prosperity of the wicked. Says Robinson: "This is the problem more acutely raised than any other, from the time that individual life came into prominence as a religious unit, down to the last book of the Old Testament to be written - Ecclesiastes. To carry

<sup>1</sup> W.P.Paterson: The Nature of Religion, Ch. IV, p. 221



the burden of this mystery was the price men had to pay for the privilege of contributing to the ideas of the Old Testament; to the pain of this problem we owe the deepest conception of piety, the demand for a life beyond death, the development of the principle of vicarious atonement."<sup>1</sup> And again he says: "We might almost write a history of Old Testament religion around the simple account of its development."<sup>1</sup>

The simplest and most naïve explanation of the fact that some suffer while others prosper is that external blessings are a seal of God's favor, and calamity a sign of his anger. Or, perhaps it would be more correct to say that the simplest explanation is some form of dualism, like that found in Zoroastrianism. But this idea did not win great acceptance in Israel. We find Satan, to be sure, in the prologue of Job, numbered among the sons of God, but even here he has no power of independent action, being unable to act without God's permission, and is therefore hardly to be considered an opponent of God. This view is found also in Zechariah 3:1f. In Chronicles we have Satan referred to as an independent being (cf. I Chron. 21:1), which is doubtless the result of Zoroastrian influence; and in Wisdom 2:24 he is represented as the author of evil; but it is nevertheless correct to say that this explanation of the problem is not at all characteristic of Hebrew religion.

The retributive idea is the earliest we have in the

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<sup>1</sup> H.W. Robinson: The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament, pp. 169-171.

Old Testament; and it persisted tenaciously. In Genesis, pain, work, and death are attributed to man's disobedience to God; Laban saw in Jacob's good fortune evidence of God's favor; the prosperity of the patriarchs is attributed to the divine benevolence. In I Sam. 14:24ff. we read that Jonathan's violation of the food taboo resulted in the silencing of the oracle, and Saul would have killed him but for the people's objection. In the same book we are told that the Philistine cities were afflicted because of the presence of the ark, and the ark was accordingly returned with substantial presents. The same idea is found in the writings of the prophets. Amos saw warnings from God in a series of calamities (4:6-12), and in 3:6 he asks, "Shall evil befall a city and Jehovah hath not done it?" in a way that implies that the supposition would hardly be doubted. This thought underlies the whole book of Deuteronomy, and especially is this evident in Chapter 28, where it is declared that if the people will hear the voice of Jehovah and obey his commandments, "God will set thee high above all the nations of the earth. ... Blessed shalt thou be in the city ... and in the field.... Blessed shall be the fruit of the ground, and the fruit of thy beasts,... thy basket and thy kneading-trough." As a matter of fact, the place and influence of the prophets were due to a great extent to such appeals.

It should be noted that sin is said to be the cause of suffering, and righteousness the antecedent of prosperity. But these terms are not to be identified with morality. Sin may be either moral or unmoral. Sin is that which displeases

the deity, and such displeasure may come from the violation of moral, religious, or ritualistic codes. But at the same time we find in Hebrew religion a strong emphasis upon the moral character of God, resulting in the belief that he administers human affairs on moral principles. Consider also the fact that all human fortunes were attributed to Yahweh, and not to some other power, and we can see how every experience of suffering thus came to be ascribed to God's will, and interpreted by this simple scheme of retribution.

This theory was apparently accepted without question in Israel until the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Before the time of these prophets the nation was looked upon as the religious unit, and not the individual. Yahweh was thought to be concerned only with the well-being of the nation, and neither to be interested in, nor to possess control over, the life of the individual Israelite who had passed beyond this world. Accordingly, it was not impossible to defend this penal idea of suffering, because there was always some incident to which appeal could be made as having been responsible for God's displeasure. Israel was defeated at Ai because Achan had stolen the spoils of Jericho (Joshua 7); and the tribes of the wilderness were smitten with a plague following the visitation of quails, because certain ones had "lusted" and therefore "the anger of Jehovah was kindled against the people." But with Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the individual comes into his own as the religious unit, and the problem of suffering cannot be so easily explained. While it is undoubtedly true that much, if not most, suf-



fering is due to the violation of known laws - physical, social, and spiritual - it is equally true that perfect justice is not the rule in this life, judging, at least, by our best human standards and our human perspective. There is undeserved suffering, and undeserved reward. Jeremiah raised the question, "Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they at ease that deal treacherously?" (12:1ff.), and again, "Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable?" (15:18). The old adage, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," was contradicted by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. "Every one shall die for his own iniquity; every one that eateth sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge." (Jer. 31:30; cf. Ezek. 18:2ff.). Ezekiel accepted the Deuteronomic idea, and applied it rigorously to individuals. He declared that the man who does right will be rewarded by prosperity, and the man who sins will be taken by an early or a painful death. (Cf. cc. 14, 18). This doctrine became firmly rooted in the national consciousness. It logically followed that a man's outward fortunes were the infallible criteria of his inward character and of his relationship to God. This idea is found throughout the Old Testament, and some scholars have declared it to be characteristic of the Old Testament. The Chronicler rewrote history, showing that sin had always been followed by misfortune, for the individual and for the nation. It is found in Psalms 32, 43, 37, to

mention only a few; and in Proverbs 2:21f., 10:2, 11:19, 11:31, 15:24f., 19:16. Haggai (1:15ff.) attributed the misfortunes of the returned exiles to their delay in rebuilding the temple; and Joel built his prophecy around the devastation of the land by locusts.

This retributive explanation of the facts of life, needless to say, is by no means confined to the Hebrews.<sup>1</sup> Nor should one jump to the conclusion that these people were selfish and material in their attitude toward religion. One has only to glance at some of the prayers of primitive people to see to what extent religion has been concerned with what Professor Paterson calls the physical and social values<sup>2</sup>, or to examine the data which anthropologists have collected to realize how religion has been bound up with self-maintenance.<sup>3</sup> In speaking of the Hebrews, one writer says that this penal idea of suffering held on tenaciously and "is not wholly overcome at the present day."<sup>4</sup> Indeed it has not been wholly overcome! The present writer has had several opportunities to observe how people today are inclined to look upon calamities as having been sent by God. He was in Mississippi at the time of the flood in 1927, and it was not uncommon to hear the opinion expressed, even from pulpits, that God had sent the disaster as punishment. The destructive cyclone in Florida the same year,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Augustine: De Civitate Dei, Books 1-10

<sup>2</sup> Cf. R.H.Lowie: Primitive Religion, cc. 1-4

<sup>3</sup> W.G.Sumner and A.G.Keller: The Science of Society, Vol.2  
J.G.Frazer: The Golden Bough, passim

<sup>4</sup> H.P.Smith: The Religion of Israel, p. 275

in the opinion of many, was evidence of God's displeasure at the laxity in the observance of the sabbath; and as he writes this he is living in a community where cotton, the staple product, is being destroyed by insects, and not a few persons have offered this ancient and simple theory to account for the calamity. Professor Paterson says further: "It is doubtful if the multitude has ever greatly appreciated the more spiritual elements of Christianity. In the older period the blessings chiefly consisted for the popular mind in escaping Hell, passing easily through Purgatory, and winning Heaven, and also in providential dispensations which could be relied on for the protection and prosperity of towns, families, and individuals; and it is because its faith in both articles has been shaken, while it has not become more fitted to appreciate spiritual promises, that there has been an epidemic of religious indifference in the latter days."<sup>1</sup>

It would be incorrect, however, to say that the Hebrews allowed the matter to rest at this point, and equally incorrect to say that the retributive explanation is "characteristic of the Old Testament." This doctrine was a continual stumbling-block to the righteous man in trouble. He could, and did, look to God for deliverance, and sometimes, of course, the deliverance did come. But at other times his suffering continued, in which event his only alternative was to look upon his case as one of

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1 W.P.Paterson: op. cit., p. 217



hidden sin, which had thus become unmasked. We find, however, in the Old Testament other attempts to meet the problem, and in justice to the Hebrews we must mention them briefly.

In the first place, there are attempts to show that there is some purpose behind suffering. The theory is advanced in Hosea that suffering is sent as a discipline. Hosea, as well as others, would say that suffering is deserved, but he goes on to show that its purpose is more than retributive. Such was his conception of the punishment meted out to his wife, and such the calamities of the nation. Eliphaz, the orthodox, proposes this theory in Job 5:17ff., and it is found in Proverbs 3:11f. This theory, too, is one that could be defended as long as the nation was the religious unit, but it is not satisfactory at the appearance of individualism. Another idea is that suffering is sent by God as a test. There are many aspects of the problem in Job, and various interpretations of the book have been proposed;<sup>1</sup> but in its present form this is apparently what the book teaches. Job himself refutes the orthodox theories proposed by his friends, but when we are permitted to look behind the scenes, we are told that God granted Satan permission to put Job's righteousness to the test, when Satan accused Job of not fearing God "for naught." Another attempt to show that there is a purpose behind suffering is found in the conception of the Suffer-

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<sup>1</sup> For a review of the many interpretations of Job see Davidson and Lanchester: Job, pp. xxvi ff.

ing Servant, which is doubtless the noblest solution found in the Old Testament. The Servant is God's representative upon earth, who quietly and patiently teaches religion to the nations. He is "a light to the Gentiles," and through him salvation is brought, not only to the Jews, but "unto the ends of the earth" (Is. 49:1ff.). In this service the Servant will suffer, but ultimately the nations will see that he has been an offering for their sins (Is. 53:10-12). Suffering is thus declared to be neither punishment nor a discipline nor a test of faith, but a part of God's purpose for the world.

In a few cases we find expressed the thought that the problem is a hopeless one, and that man should dismiss it from his mind. This, in the opinion of some scholars, is the purport of Job 28, which is an independent poem, inserted to "correct" the teaching of the book. Man should fear God, avoid evil, and give his attention to the practical problems of life.<sup>1</sup> In this category, too, belongs the book of Ecclesiastes, if we accept the view, advanced by many critics, that the passages where judgment is threatened (3:17, 11:9, 12:14) are interpolations. The author, according to 2:26, and 7:18,26, does seem to think that the righteous man has some advantage over the wicked; but in general he is contradicting Ezekiel's doctrine of exact retribution. He says, "There is a righteous man that

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. H.P.Smith: The Religion of Israel, pp. 148f.  
 Driver and Gray: The Book of Job, Vol. 1, pp. 232ff.  
 E.C.S.Gibson: Job, pp. 148ff.

perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his ~~evil~~ evil-doing" (7:15); and again, "The wise man's eyes are in his head, and the fool walketh in darkness; and yet I perceive that one event happeneth to them all" (2:14). The author does not deny the existence and goodness of God, but he does not believe in a future life, and apparently feels that the world-order admits of no moral explanation (9:2ff.)<sup>1</sup>

A solution of the problem through belief in personal immortality was slow to develop in Judaism. We do have a few indications of such a belief in the Old Testament, however. But the doctrine of the immortality of the individual, as a solution of the problem of the injustice of life, did not make a great appeal to the Hebrew. The old national point of view was too strong, and reasserted itself in this realm of his thought. The Jew was more concerned about the glorious future of the nation than of the individual. For himself, he looked forward to a blessed future as a citizen of Yahweh's kingdom. Accordingly, many influences - their conception of Yahweh, their faith in him, their suffering, their aspirations, their patriotism, their belief in a resurrection, derived perhaps from Persia - combined to produce what is known as the Messianic hope. This hope appealed to the faith, and enlisted the allegiance of the loyal Israelite. We shall return to

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<sup>1</sup> Most of these theories are proposed also in the non-canonical writings. Cf. Thomas Walker: Jesus and Jewish Teaching, pp 39-42, and R.H.Charles: A Critical History of the Doctrine of the Future Life in Israel, in Judaism, and in Christianity, passim.



this subject when we come to the discussion of Jesus' third temptation, but it is introduced here to show how it is related to the other temptations, and how it is bound up with the questions that were in Jesus' mind - "If I am a son of God, what may I expect? and what is implied?"

We have ventured to make the above digression in the effort to present the proper background against which the temptations of Jesus should be viewed. We do not mean that Jesus was, during the forty days in the wilderness, trying to find a solution of the problem of evil, nor do we mean that the temptation narrative contains another theory to be added to the list. Jesus was simply thinking about the privileges, advantages, and duties of sonship, which was essentially the thought in the minds of those writers who dealt with the problem of suffering. The above résumé indicates to what extent man's material welfare has been linked up with his religion. We have seen that this has been a problem of prime importance, not only to Jews, but to all mankind. We have seen, too, that the Hebrews gave much thought to it, and have written so much about it that one scholar declares, "We might almost write a history of Old Testament religion around the simple account of its development."<sup>1</sup> Jesus, therefore, during the temptation, was facing questions of tremendous interest and concern to all men - a persistent and universal

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<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 170

religious problem; and he was not debating such personal and limited questions as to how he, as Messiah, should conduct himself, or what sort of Messiah he should be. How much more important the temptations become when we see them in the light of this greater problem, and how much easier to understand why Jesus reported them to his disciples! He was dealing with problems that all men, adherents of all faiths, have faced.

Jesus began to feel hungry, and his hunger presented a temptation to his mind. If God really loved him, and looked upon him as a son, would he not provide him with the things he needed? Would he not give him power even to turn stones into bread? In the past God had done things no less miraculous for his sons. He had provided Israel with manna and quails (Ex. 16); he had caused the waters of Marah to be made sweet (Ex. 15:22ff.); he had brought water from the Rock of Rephidim (Ex. 17:1-7); he had provided for Elijah at Cherith and at Zerephath (I Kings 17:6,16). The Psalms abound in assurances that God provides for, and prospers, those whom he loves. In 33:18f. we read: "The eye of Jehovah is upon them that fear him, and upon them that hope in his lovingkindness, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine." 34:9f. goes further in its promises: "There is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek Jehovah shall not want any good thing." In 37 we find promises of se-

curity for those who trust in God, and the assurance that "He will give thee the desires of thy heart," and that "in the days of famine they shall be satisfied." 81:13ff. says that if God's son, Israel, will walk in his ways, he will "feed them also with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock;" and 84:11, "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." 92:12ff. maintains that "the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon;" and 112:1-3 that "blessed is the man that feareth Jehovah. ... Wealth and riches are in his house." (Cf. also Ps. 1:3; 75; 105; 106:4f.; 107:4-6, 33-36; 125; 132:13-15; 146:7.) When we come to the prophecies we shall see that there, too, prosperity, plenty, long life, and happiness were held out as the rewards for the faithful.

The Scriptures, then, seemed to testify that God does provide not only bread, but other material blessings, for those who fear him, and whom he has chosen. If one with less spiritual insight than Jesus had been searching the Old Testament for an answer to his questions, he would doubtless have come to the conclusion that God would indeed satisfy his hunger and provide for his needs. But Jesus employed a type of Biblical criticism that led him to a different conviction. He put aside all that testimony of the Scriptures that assured him that God gives material good things to his sons, and declared it to be a temptation of the devil. There is a positive and a negative aspect of each of Jesus' replies to the tempter.



He rejected the suggestion that, if he were God's son, he should expect bread from heaven. "Bread" is not evidence of God's love and approval. Sonship does not mean the receiving of material blessings from God. The contrary is often true, that "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head." But Jesus does not simply reject this attitude; he proposes something positive in its place. The Scripture also said, "Man doth not live by bread alone" (Dt. 8:3). All of Jesus' replies are taken from Dt. 6 and 8, which fact indicates that these chapters must have been uppermost in his mind on this occasion. And the one, great, recurring thought in those chapters is this: "Beware lest thou forget Jehovah" (6:12; 8:11). Israel is warned that "when Jehovah thy God shall bring thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers ... to give thee, great cities, houses full of good things, vineyards and olive trees, and thou shalt eat and be full, then beware lest thou forget Jehovah" (6:10ff.; cf. 8:7ff.). And God had given Israel this rich land, and to the wandering tribes this was like changing stones into bread. But prosperity and plenty had not brought with it devoted, grateful, and obedient hearts. Instead, "they sacrificed unto the Baalim, and burned incense to graven images" (Hos. 11:2). Jesus saw that possessions, prosperity, ease, and plenty are not the whole of life; nor are they essential to the abundant life; but, on the contrary, they

often crowded out of men's lives those things which are essential, and blinded their eyes to the spiritual values. And so he declared, "Man shall not live by bread alone." He did not deny the basic importance of "bread", but he simply perceived that life - abundant life - feeds upon something else. "Life is more than food" was a principle which Jesus repeatedly taught, and which he wrung from this struggle in the wilderness.

Jesus thus rejected special provision as an advantage of sonship. But if sonship does not mean that God will bestow material blessings upon one, perhaps it means that He will provide special protection. Does not God protect those whom He has chosen, against the dangers and hardships of life? It is the promise of Psalm 91 that proves to be a temptation to him, with its declarations:

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High  
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. ...  
For He will deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,  
And from the deadly pestilence. ...  
Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night,  
Nor for the arrow that flieth by day;  
For the pestilence that walketh in darkness,  
Nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.  
A thousand shall fall at thy side,  
And ten thousand at thy right hand;  
But it shall not come nigh thee.  
Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold  
And see the reward of the wicked. ...  
There shall no evil befall thee,  
Neither shall any plague come nigh thy tent.  
For He will give His angels charge over thee,  
To keep thee in all thy ways;  
They shall bear thee up in their hands,  
Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.  
Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder;  
The young lion and the serpent shalt thou trample  
under foot;  
Because He hath set His love upon thee; therefore  
will I deliver him."

Here is a temptation for Jesus. If he is God's son, should he not expect such protection as one of his privileges? Jesus expressed the temptation in his customary, figurative, hyperbolical language, and pictured himself in an extremely dangerous place - upon the pinnacle of the temple. Perhaps he felt that the more difficult the situation, the greater would be the evidence of the son's faith in the promises and power of God. Would not God's protection extend to his sons in whatever difficulty they found themselves?

The Scriptures, apparently, would lead one to reach an affirmative conclusion. Indeed, that section of Deuteronomy about which Jesus is thinking, records many occasions when God had miraculously intervened in Israel's behalf. That he had brought them up out of Egypt is repeatedly mentioned (6:12, 21; 7:18; 8:14); that he had displayed "signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his house, before our eyes", is recorded in 6:22 (cf. 7:18,19); and that he had led them through "the great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions" (8:15), and had "cast out seven nations greater and mightier than thou" (7:1), are referred to; and finally the promises were given that "Jehovah will take away from thee all sickness, and none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, will he put upon thee" (7:15), that he will destroy their enemies before them, and "deliver their kings into thy hand" (7:17-24).



The historical books record instances of special, miraculous intervention in behalf of God's chosen ones, too numerous, and too familiar to mention; the prophecies predict further manifestations in the future; and the Psalms give expression to such a faith.<sup>1</sup> Jesus, accordingly, is led to wonder if he, as a son of God, should not expect such divine protection as Psalm 91 promises.

As he refused to look to God for special provision, so he refused to expect special protection. With his discerning eye, he selected another teaching of the Scriptures (Dt. 6:16), which would hardly have attracted the attention of most readers, and declared, "It is written, Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God." One should trust, and not tempt, God. In fact, to put God to such a test, to expect special favors from him, is unmistakable proof that one does not have faith and trust in the goodness, and wisdom, and power of God. It is a far cry from the vow of Jacob to this statement from Jesus. Whereas Jacob said, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall Jehovah be my God," (Gen.28:20f.), Jesus determined that he would expect none of these things from God, but would trust him in spite of any obstacle that might arise. And when he was driven to an early

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Psalms 4, 5, 16, 17, 18, 20, 27, 34, 35, 37, 41, 50, 55, 56, 58, 59, 60, 63, 64, 70, 78, 81, 83, 89, 92, 97, 105, 106, 107, 112, 124, 125, 129, 132, 135, 136, 138, 145.

and horrible death, which would surely have shattered the faith of a Jacob, Jesus cried out, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

These two temptations were thus concerned with a problem which theologians would call "special providence." On this point Macintosh writes: "Nor ought we to expect, or even desire, to have God take better care of us and our friends than he does of other people. Indeed, a God who had special favorites would be ... unfair, ... not morally perfect, .... not trustworthy. .... The solution of this problem of the divine providence seems to be found in the discarding of the idea of a rigid opposition between the concepts of providence and grace. ... It is in the realm of grace that the special providence of God is to be looked for. Special providence is spiritual provision. It is the divine provision of sufficient grace to enable the individual who enters into and persists in the right religious adjustment to meet in the right spirit whatever he may be called upon to face. ... The fact is, we seem to know no special providence other than the provision of special grace adequate to our special circumstances and our special spiritual need."<sup>1</sup> This is apparently what Jesus comes to, although he expresses it differently. His religion does not separate him from others, and give him advantages over others, but makes him one with them. Because he feels himself to be a son of God, he will not

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1 D.C.Macintosh: Theology as an Empirical Science, pp. 172-175.

therefore expect God to provide him with material blessings, and shield him from dangers. A son, he concludes, should perceive that there are spiritual realities upon which life feeds, and in which eternal life consists; and a son should trust implicitly in the wisdom, goodness, and power of God.



## Chapter IX

## The Third Temptation

When Jesus had rejected the thought that special provision and special protection are the privileges of sonship, he was next confronted with the temptation to expect to receive "the kingdoms of the world and their glory." Just as we have taken "bread" to be symbolical of material blessings, and a safe leap from the temple to be symbolical of supernatural protection, we shall take "the kingdoms of the world and their glory" to be symbolical of dominion, power, and majesty. Here is a temptation that would come to the adherents of only a few of the world's religions, but it would come to a Jew, because Jews held certain beliefs about the eschatology of their nation that would suggest such a temptation. We shall therefore have to look into these beliefs in order to determine their nature and their force.

As early as the eighth century B.C. we find evidence for this faith in the popular idea of the "day of Yahweh." This conception sprang doubtless from the belief that Israel was Yahweh's chosen nation, and that Yahweh was Israel's own God. To the great majority, the day of Yahweh would be a time when God would usher in a period of unbroken prosperity and happiness for the people of Israel, following a series of victories over her enemies. It was a material, national, miraculous, non-ethical conception.

The prophets of the eighth century used the expression, but gave it a different meaning. According to

Amos, the day of Yahweh will be "darkness and not light" (5:1-3); it will result in the captivity of the nation (5:5,27). Other nations will be punished, too; but Israel especially will be afflicted because of her greater opportunities and advantages (3:1ff.). The same emphasis is found in Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah. (Cf. Hos. 10:8; 13:16; Is. 3; 5:8-24; 28:14ff.; 29:1-4; Micah 3:12.)

These were prophets of doom. There is, however, the possibility that in Isaiah 1:24-26 we have a genuine prophecy of hope, wherein is expressed the belief that the nation will be restored on a righteous foundation. In none of these prophets is there mention of a Messiah, nor of universal judgment; although other nations are dealt with, it is because of their relation to the Jews. If the hope passage of Isaiah be genuine, the blessings of the kingdom are not extended to foreigners, but Israel alone will enjoy them.

Nahum and Habakkuk renewed the old, popular idea of the day of Yahweh. God, they taught, will intervene on behalf of Israel against Assyria. There is this difference however. Whereas in the earlier belief such intervention was natural, with these prophets it is moral. Israel is a righteous nation, compared with wicked Assyria. If Nahum 1 - 2:2 be genuine, we have at this time a prophecy of the coming kingdom of Yahweh which will follow the judgment; if not, Nahum dealt only with the overthrow of Ninevah. Zephaniah declared that the day of Yahweh would be a world-judgment. "All the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy" (3:8). The kingdom will follow, consisting

of the righteous remnant of Israel. "They shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid" (3:13). In none of these is there mention of a Messiah.

When we pass to the period of the Exile we find that prophecy emphasized hope and blessing instead of doom. Also, as we have seen, the individual came in for consideration. Jeremiah declared that the Exile would last for seventy years (29:10), after which time Israel would be converted and restored, and the kingdom would begin (29:10-14). God will give them a righteous ruler of the line of David (23:5f.), but he means, not an individual, but a dynasty. Jeremiah extended the blessings of the kingdom to all the world (4:2; 12:14ff.; 16:19ff.), saying that only the impenitent will be plucked up and destroyed (12:17). With Ezekiel it is different. He predicted that the judgment would fall upon Israelites individually, but the Gentiles would be judged collectively. Israel and Judah will be restored to their land, and the Messianic kingdom be established (17:22ff.), which will be ruled over by a prince (34:23f.; 37:22ff.). That he means a dynasty and not an individual is shown by 45:8 and 46:16. Ezekiel held out a hopeless destiny for the Gentiles (17:22ff.).

According to Charles<sup>1</sup>, Jeremiah and Ezekiel set in motion two conflicting lines of prophecy. In Deutero-Isaiah, a successor of Jeremiah, we are told that the

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1 R.H.Charles: A Critical History of the Doctrine of the Future Life in Israel, in Judaism, and in Christianity.



people will return, Jerusalem and the temple will be rebuilt, and the desolation of the city will be put to an end. Through the Servant of Yahweh, the righteous remnant, salvation will be carried not only to the "tribes of Jacob", but "unto the ends of the earth" (Is. 49:6). In the post-exilic passage of Is. 2:2-4 (Micah 4:1-3) we are told that the nations will come to learn of the ways of God; they will walk in his paths; and peace will reign. The same thought is expressed in Psalms 22, 65, 86, 87, where we read that all the nations will come to worship God.

But according to the successors of Ezekiel, the day of Yahweh will bring deliverance and the Messianic kingdom to Israel, but to the Gentiles it will bring either annihilation or servitude. This idea is found in parts of Isaiah, where we are told that the Gentiles will escort the returning Israelites to Jerusalem and become their servants (14:2); or they will become slaves and manual laborers (61:5; 60:12; etc.); or they will be utterly destroyed (34:1ff.; 63:6). Another successor of Ezekiel was Haggai, who taught that the temple must first be rebuilt, after which God would overthrow the heathen powers and establish the kingdom, with Zerubbabel as the Messianic prince (2:20ff.). Zechariah was in agreement with Haggai, but added that uprightness will be required of the members of the kingdom, and that the nations that survive will worship Jehovah. Joel thought that the

Gentiles would be gathered together and annihilated (3:1ff.), and that Israel would be purified by the outpouring of God's Spirit (2:28f.).

Thus, up to this time, the kingdom of Yahweh was pictured as an eternal, earthly kingdom, primarily for Israel. With the exception of a few followers of Jeremiah, it was generally thought that the Gentiles would be utterly destroyed, or that they would become subordinate in the kingdom.

These ideas were further developed in the apocryphal and apocalyptic writings of the first and second centuries B. C. In the Sibylline Oracles (3:653ff.) we find the belief that God will "send from the sun a king," who will put an end to war, "killing some, and with some making a sure agreement." He will do all things in obedience to God. The earth will abound in good things. The Gentiles will attack the land, and seek to destroy the temple, but "they shall all perish at the hand of the Everlasting." But "all the sons of the High God shall dwell peaceably round the temple" (3:703f.). Then in 3:745ff. we find a description of the blessings of that age - the earth will yield its best, cities will be filled with good things, there shall be no more wars, nor earthquakes, nor drought, nor hail.

The book of Daniel is concerned chiefly with the empire of Israel, and looks for the coming of the eternal Messianic kingdom upon earth, that will displace the

heathen powers. It consequently shows little concern for the individual, except for those who have materially helped or hindered the realization of this ideal. To the former, who have died, there is promised a resurrection to everlasting life; and to the latter a resurrection to "shame and everlasting contempt" (12:2). As for the great mass of Israelites who belong to neither of these categories, it is their fate to remain in Sheol. The kingdom which is to be established will be "an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away ... and which shall not be destroyed" (7:14).

Another emphasis is found in Ethiopic Enoch 1 - 36, where the concern is not so much with the future of the nation as with the problem of reward and punishment for the individual. In this scheme, Sheol is divided into four sections. In the first division are those righteous persons who have met with undeserved death; in the second, the other righteous ones; in the third, sinners who did not receive punishment on earth; and in the fourth, sinners who had been adequately punished. The last named will remain forever in Sheol, but the others will be raised for the day of judgment. Those in the first and second groups will rise with their bodies and enjoy the blessings of the kingdom, while those in the third division will rise to receive punishment in Gehenna. There is no mention of a Messiah.

The writer of Enoch 83-90 prophesies that all the



nations will attempt to destroy Judas Maccabeus (at the time of whom he is writing), but God will intervene and cause the earth to cleave asunder and swallow them. Then God will take his seat upon the throne of judgment. Following this, God will "fold up" the "old house", and establish the New Jerusalem. The surviving Gentiles will be converted, the dispersed Jews will be brought back, and the righteous dead of Israel will be raised to enjoy the kingdom. Then the Messiah will appear. (90:13-38).

In this group of writers the kingdom was still thought of as coming upon earth, but Enoch 83-90 reflects the idea, which was developed further in the following century, that this earth is too imperfect a place for the realization of God's kingdom, and that God will therefore bring down a New Jerusalem from heaven. But this kingdom, earthly or heavenly, will be eternal, and its members will live forever according to Enoch 90; or "they shall live a long life, such as thy fathers lived," according to Enoch 25:6 (cf. 5:9 and Dan. 12). There is no mention of a Messiah, except in the Sibylline Oracles 3:653ff. and in Enoch 90, in both of which instances he plays an unimportant rôle.

In Enoch 91-104 we find the idea of an earthly kingdom of God abandoned. God is too holy, and man too sinful, for such a thought to be entertained. In this book, therefore, the final judgment and the eternal kingdom are relegated to the close of the earthly Messianic kingdom, which, for the first time, is declared to be of temporary duration. The

righteous dead will rise, not for the earthly, but for the heavenly kingdom. As for sinners, their "souls will be made to descend into Sheol, and they will become wretched, and great will be their tribulation" (103:7).

The author of Enoch 37-70, on the contrary, clings to the belief in an everlasting Messianic kingdom. But the scene of this kingdom will be a transformed heaven and earth (45:4f.). The Messiah who is to come is portrayed as a supernatural being. He is the judge of the world and the revealer of all knowledge; he possesses wisdom, righteousness, and power (46:3, 42, 49); he will avenge, and vindicate, and rule the righteous. At the proper time this Son of Man will come to execute judgment (46:4ff.); the kings of the earth will perish (38:5); the godless will be driven from the presence of the righteous, and "those that possess the earth shall no longer be powerful and exalted" (38:3f.); heaven and earth will be transformed (45:5f); and the righteous will be given their dwelling-places "forever and ever" (39:4f.). Regarding the doctrine of the resurrection, it appears that, according to 61:5, only the righteous will participate; but 51:1 states that "in those days shall the earth also give back that which has been entrusted to it, and Sheol also give back that which it has received, and hell shall give back that which it owes."

In the Psalms of Solomon there is an interesting description of the coming Messiah. He is to be of the line

of David, he will "break in pieces the unrighteous rulers" (17:23ff.), he will be pure and righteous (17:35,41), he will "gather together a holy people, whom he shall lead in righteousness" (17:28), he will destroy sinners "by the might of his word" (17:41), and those whom he does not destroy will be made to serve him (17:31ff.). From 17:50 we get the impression that the kingdom will be enjoyed only by those alive at the time of its establishment.

As Charles points out<sup>1</sup>, there is a different picture in the Psalms of Solomon 1-16. There is no reference to a Messiah, but the kingdom is nevertheless expected. The emphasis, however, is placed upon the punishment which will be meted out to hostile nations and sinners. The righteous will be rewarded, not by participation in a temporal kingdom, but "they that fear the Lord shall rise unto eternal life" (3:16). As for the wicked, "their inheritance is Hades, and darkness, and destruction" (14:5,6).

This résumé of the eschatological hopes of the Jewish people has been given, not with the view to tracing the development of the idea, but simply to suggest the great variety of opinions that were held, and to indicate what were its essential features. Many and diverse were the views that were entertained, and unanimity of

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1 Op. cit., pp. 223ff.



opinion was something that was never reached. In almost every aspect of the faith there were differences of belief.

As we have seen, all Jews were not agreed as to the scene of the kingdom's realization. In general, we may say that it was expected that the kingdom would be realized on this earth, but there were those who believed that the eternal kingdom would be in heaven, and there the righteous would receive their reward. But there were others who believed that the kingdom would come upon earth - a new and transformed earth, however. Furthermore, there were differences of belief as to the duration of the kingdom. We have seen that during the greater part of the history of the hope, it was believed that the Messianic age would exist upon earth eternally; but as we drew nearer to the Christian era we saw that there developed the idea that there would be a temporary kingdom upon earth, culminating in the eternal, heavenly kingdom. At first the dead were not considered; then it was thought that the righteous would be raised to enjoy the blessings; or that pious and sinners alike would return to earth to receive judgment; or that judgment would not come until the close of the earthly kingdom.

The rôle of the Messiah, too, came in for much speculation. To a great many writers, Yahweh himself would accomplish all those things for which they hoped. But we have found the belief that God would give the people a

Messiah. To some this meant a dynasty of Davidic rulers; to others an individual, born of the line of David; to others a supernatural, militant, Son of Man. But the Messiah was not an essential element in the hope. The day of Yahweh, the judgment, and the kingdom were the essential features.

There were also many opinions as to the fate of the Gentiles. At first the Gentiles were not considered, except insofar as they were related to Israel; but before long the belief in universal judgment arose. On the one hand there were prophets who foretold the conversion of the nations of the world and their participation in the kingdom; on the other hand there were those who were less charitable, teaching that the Gentiles would be completely annihilated, or that the hostile ones would be destroyed, and the others appointed to a menial and inferior position.

As to the nature of the kingdom to be established, there was a continual emphasis upon its righteousness. It would be a time when God's will would be obeyed. But there were other features. To the great majority of people it must have meant a time when there would be peace, prosperity, plenty, and happiness. Its members would enjoy a long, if not eternal, life. The powers of nature would be immensely increased, and the earth would be inconceivably fruitful. As one writer puts it: "It was to be a time when ideals would be realized, and ideals varied. ... The great body of people who longed for the kingdom wanted it to bring

them a better living, more food and clothing and leisure, together with social recognition and political pre-eminence."<sup>1</sup>

In this mass of diverse beliefs it is possible to recognize a few fairly common elements. Running through them all is the belief that in the kingdom of God righteousness would prevail, and God's will be done. There is also the expectation that the members of the kingdom would enjoy peace, prosperity, comfort, and happiness. Furthermore, the kingdom would come through the intervention and miraculous activity of God himself, or of his Messiah. And finally, it was thought, with few exceptions, that the kingdom would be primarily Jewish; foreigners, if they were so fortunate as to be admitted at all, would be relegated to a menial and inferior position. The Messianic hope promised to God's sons dominion over the nations of the world, and along with it, prosperity and long life.

Here, then, is the temptation for Jesus. It is the national hope of Israel that presents a problem to him. If he really be a son of God, should he not cherish this hope and look forward to participating in the blessings that were to come. Will not God, at the proper time, which was perhaps "at hand", give to his sons dominion over the nations of the world, and along with it, health

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<sup>1</sup> E.I. Bosworth: The Life and Teaching of Jesus, pp. 46ff.  
 Cf. Shailer Mathews: A History of New Testament Times in Palestine, pp. 179ff., and  
 S.J. Case: The Millennial Hope, pp. 48-98.



and happiness and long life? The first two temptations present problems that might, in fact, do, arise in the mind of any person who thinks about religion, whatever be his faith; but this third temptation could come only to one who had been brought up in an atmosphere of a religion which cherished such eschatological hopes as those of Judaism, and not all religions are so characterized. This, however, was not a peculiarly Jewish doctrine, for there have been such hopes in other faiths.<sup>1</sup> But in the words of Case: "Never did any ... peoples hold so tenaciously as did the Jews to the hope of a glorious divine deliverance."<sup>2</sup> Through years of suffering, misfortune, and humiliation, they held to the belief that God would eventually intervene in their behalf and vindicate them and reward them. Jesus is tempted as a Jew - and not as the Messiah. The temptation comes to him in the assurance that he is a son of God. It is preposterous to insist that this temptation could come only to one who considered himself the Messiah. Mark 10:35-45 proves that this third temptation (as well as the first two) was a temptation also to the disciples, inasmuch as they belonged to the nation that claimed the right to rule over the world. How surprising it must have been to them to be told, "It is not so among you." This passage is a splendid exposition of the third temptation as it assailed all Jews, and indeed all men in whom there is ambition and a will to power. We have seen

<sup>1</sup> S.J.Case: The Millennial Hope, Ch. I, presents some Gentile hopes.

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., p. 48.

that the national hope of Israel was primarily the hope, not for a Messiah, but for dominion over the world and for what goes with it. The Messiah did not play an essential part in the eschatological doctrines; in many instances he was not mentioned at all. Millions of Jews have looked forward to the time when God would intervene and destroy their enemies, would establish his chosen ones in power, and would reward them with good things; and exceedingly few of these Jews believed that they were Messiahs. Jesus is tempted, feeling that he is verily God's son, to cherish this hope, to expect its fulfilment, and to hope to share in its glories. This, perhaps, is the privilege of sonship.

Jesus perceived that this promise was Satan's and not God's. He saw that this national ambition was tantamount to, and conditioned upon, the worship of the devil. It placed emphasis upon material things, and he had just learned from his first temptation that God's son should seek and appreciate spiritual realities. It could not be realized without the special and miraculous assistance of God, and he had learned from his second temptation that a son should not make demands upon God, but should trust him to do what is best. If he had considered it presumptuous to ask God for special protection, he could hardly have but seen that asking God to satisfy such a national ambition was a colossal demand. To look to God to grant what was desired in this hope, Jesus would have had to

repudiate what he had learned about the attitude of the true son toward the Father. He perceived the selfish ambition that underlay the hope. He realized that the granting of universal dominion to the Jews would necessitate bloodshed, suffering, injustice, evil compromises. He therefore rejected the hope, and refused to ask of God, or to hope for, dominion and power over the nations of the world.

He then declared what the attitude and duty of a son should be: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Dt. 6:13). Jesus would not make a compromise with evil; he would not give himself to anything but the highest; he would not make demands upon God, nor ask God to help him realize selfish, material ambitions; but he would give himself completely to God and to the service of God.

Jesus, thus, completely reverses the current conception of sonship. It was thought that to be a son of God - to be of such piety and character that God's love and approval were drawn to one - meant that one would receive special privileges and advantages. It meant that God would give one plenty, protection, and dominion and power - and what more does the worldly man desire? It meant the perfect satisfaction of the "physical and social" desires, with which religion has so often been associated. But Jesus reversed all of this. Sonship does not mean getting things from God at all, but giving one's self to God. It does not



mean demanding special favors from God, but surrendering everything that one has to him. A son of God is one who perceives spiritual values, and who trusts, worships, and serves God. They are "led by the Spirit of God." A more complete conversion of a conception cannot be imagined; nor can a nobler attitude toward God be conceived. To produce such a narrative as this, one would have to possess the religious genius of Jesus.

During the period of temptation, then, Jesus was not debating problems of his Messiahship, nor of his divinity, nor of his leadership of the people, nor of the political policies of the Jews, but was pondering something more vital and fundamental than any of these - his own relationship to God, to determine the significance and the implications of his conviction of sonship. He was tempted as God's son; and his problems, and their solution, concern not himself alone, but all sons of God. They apply to all men everywhere; and this is the reason who Jesus told his disciples of his experience. His forty days in the wilderness taught him that God's son should not expect material blessings from God, nor to enjoy special protection against life's dangers, nor to be given dominion over others; but a son should trust, and worship, and serve God. The true son looks not to himself, but to God. His first concern is not with the things of the world, but with the will of God. Sonship does not imply the receiving of special favors from God, but the giving of one's self to God. And so

Jesus did not allow the conviction of sonship to separate him from his fellow men, nor to expect a lot and a destiny different from theirs; but his experience led him closer to men, and endowed him with burdens even greater than theirs. True greatness does not separate its possessor from others, but unites him with them.

## Chapter X

## The Temptations in the Subsequent Life of Jesus

According to Luke, "when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him for a season," the implication doubtless being that the temptations returned to Jesus later in life. As a matter of fact, we do find occasions in Jesus' life when he had to face problems similar to those presented to him in the wilderness - temptations to expect special favors from God, or to "worship Satan." Peter, at Caesarea Philippi, acted the part of Satan in presenting a temptation. Jesus was telling his disciples how he must suffer many things, be rejected, and killed, when Peter interrupted with, "This shall never be unto thee." But Jesus had already chosen the way of the cross as being God's will for him, and he had determined to be obedient to God alone. Peter's rebuke, on the contrary, implied that long life, with powers and glories, would be more fitting for one who had just allowed himself to be called "The Christ." To this rebuke Jesus replied, "Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." He then called "unto him the multitude with his disciples, and said unto them, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."<sup>1</sup>

Again, the agony that he experienced in Gethsemane is a reflection of the forty days in the desert. Here the thought comes to him, "Father, all things are possible unto thee; re-

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<sup>1</sup> Mk. 8:31ff.; cf. Mt. 16:21ff., Lk. 9:22ff.



move this cup from me." This is a return of the second temptation, i.e., to expect deliverance from the suffering of life. But immediately he adds, "Howbeit, not what I will, but what thou wilt," which reply could come only from one who had determined to expect no special privileges from God, but to trust and obey Him whatever be the cost. A moment later, when he was arrested in the garden, and when one of his companions drew a sword and smote the servant of the high priest, Jesus objected, saying, "Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?"<sup>1</sup> If we accept this as authentic, we see that the thought was in his mind, which came to him as the second temptation; but it came to him with no force at all, and he entertained it not for a moment.

Finally, as he hung on the cross, the temptation to look to God for deliverance from suffering came to him in the taunts of the multitude. "Save thyself, and come down from the cross. To these taunts Jesus made no reply. But we are told that, at the ninth hour, he called out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It would appear that the taunts of the people were taken seriously, and that Jesus really did despair when no deliverance came. It seems that the temptation came to him in the wilderness as a theory, and he responded nobly that one should trust God always; but on the cross it came to him as a bitter reality, and Jesus fell into distrust. However, if these were his last words, we cannot help feeling

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<sup>1</sup> Mt. 26:53

that something is absent from the picture; for our three evangelists agree that Jesus died in such a manner that a heathen centurion declared, "Truly this man was a son of God." Luke gives us what we feel is lacking. He tells us that Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." These words remind us of what he said in the wilderness, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," and conforms perfectly with Jesus as we know him.<sup>1</sup>

It would not be incorrect to say that the problems which confronted Jesus so forcibly in the wilderness were there settled once and for all, and never disturbed him again. To be sure, those temptations did return - in the words of Peter, in the taunts of the multitude - but these came from without, and can hardly be called temptations for Jesus. In Gethsemane, the hope that God would take the cup from him is completely overshadowed by the attitude, "Not my will, but thine, be done." We may say, therefore, that when Jesus rejected the thought that special advantages and privileges belonged to him as a son of God, the problem was settled in his mind forever, and never again made any great appeal to him. However, the lessons that he learned, and the convictions at which he arrived, during that period in the desert, were always with him, and are reflected continually in his subsequent life and teachings. We must turn to some of these instances.

We have taken the position that during the forty days in the wilderness Jesus was tempted to believe - or to continue

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<sup>1</sup> Mt. 27:39ff., Mk. 15:29ff., Lk. 23:46f.

to hold the belief - that there were special privileges and advantages implied in sonship; but the outcome of the struggle was this: he saw that (1) one should not look to God for special material benefits, but should realize that there are spiritual values which are important and indispensable for life; (2) one should not look to God for special protection, but should have implicit faith and trust in God - in His goodness, wisdom, providence, and power; (3) one should not look to God for power and dominion over others, and should never revere nor compromise with that which is contrary to God's will, but should give himself unreservedly to God - to worship, serve, and obey Him alone. Of course, the temptations came to Jesus himself, who was convinced that he was a son of God; but they are of interest to all sons of God, who have faced these same problems since man first began to reflect about religion. These principles and attitudes are found throughout Jesus' teachings. He exemplified every one of them himself, and taught his disciples to adopt them.

The principles and attitudes which Jesus reached during his temptation are reflected in his teaching about God. In the first place, Jesus denied that possessions and power are evidence of God's favor, and that suffering is evidence of His displeasure. He told his disciples that "they who are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them ... but it is not so among you."<sup>1</sup> He contradicted outright Ezekiel's doctrine of exact retribution in one of his parables, where

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<sup>1</sup> Mk. 10:42f., Mt. 20:25f., Lk. 22:25f.



he pictured the righteous man, Lazarus, as a poor, afflicted, beggar, and the unrighteous man as rich and clothed in purple and fine linen.<sup>1</sup> Far from denouncing the poor and unfortunate as sinners above all the rest, he declared that God loves them. "Blessed are ye poor ... and ye that hunger ... and ye that weep," and, "woe unto you that are rich."<sup>2</sup> We find the second temptation clearly reflected in his denying that the Galileans whom Pilate had slain "were sinners above all Galileans, because they have suffered these things," or that "those upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and killed .... were offenders above all that dwell in Jerusalem."<sup>3</sup> Again we hear him declaring that "that which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God."<sup>4</sup> The things that men exalt are wealth, self-preservation, long life, power, and the like. But the things that God approves are sincerity, humility, obedience to His will, love to God and to one's neighbor - some of which virtues have never been highly exalted among men. Consider, further, how Jesus described God's dealings with men. God is just and impartial. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."<sup>5</sup> "He is kind toward the unthankful and evil."<sup>6</sup> Like the sower, God scatters His blessings to all sorts of men.<sup>7</sup> He is concerned with every one of His creatures. It is not God's will that "one of these little ones should perish."<sup>8</sup> He knows what men need, and He grants men their needs - not always what they want and ask for, how-

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1 Lk.16:19ff.

2 Lk. 6:20ff.

3 Lk.13:1ff.

4 Lk.16:15

5 Mt. 5:45

6 Lk. 6:35

7 Mk. 4:3ff., Mt. 13:3ff., Lk. 8:5ff.

8 Mt. 18:14

ever, but "good things."<sup>1</sup> And God gives these things, not for previous goodness, but simply for their prayers.<sup>2</sup> God deals with men, not on the basis of merit at all, but bountifully and graciously. Grace, rather than merit, is the basis for God's dealings. Many of the parables illustrate the grace and love of God, that passes all understanding. God, however, expects men to do their part. God gives them the opportunity, and it is for men to appreciate, and appropriate, and use those opportunities. God gives men talents, for which they are responsible.<sup>3</sup> He invites men to the great feast, but it is for men to accept or refuse the invitation.<sup>4</sup>

We see, therefore, that in Jesus' message about God's attitude toward men, how He deals with them, what is His will for them - a message which the poor and outcast, the publicans and harlots, heard so gladly - there is reflected the lesson which he learned during the forty days in the wilderness.

We have said that Jesus' first temptation was that he expect special provision, material blessings, as belonging to sonship, but Jesus rejected the thought. He is himself an illustration of this principle, for he never possessed an abundance of things. On the contrary, he said to one who would follow him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head."<sup>5</sup> He did not promise great material blessings to those who adopted his message. Instead he demanded that they renounce all that they had, and take up their crosses.<sup>6</sup> He

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1 Mt. 7:11

2 Mt. 7:7ff., Lk. 11:9ff.

3 Mt. 25:14ff., Lk. 19:12ff.

4 Lk. 14:15ff.

5 Mt. 8:20, Lk. 9:58

6 Mk. 8:34, Mt. 10:38, 16:24, Lk. 9:23, 14:27ff.



did teach his disciples to pray for bread enough for the day, but not for more. Nor did he promise them great rewards. Once he did say, "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospels, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time," but to this he added "with persecutions."<sup>1</sup> He also said that they would receive eternal life, but "narrow is the gate, and straightened the way, that leadeth unto life."<sup>2</sup> Even in the world to come he taught them not to look for a sensuous, material existence, for "they that are accounted worthy to attain to that world ... neither marry nor are given in marriage, ... for they are equal unto the angels, and are sons of God."<sup>3</sup>

In rejecting this temptation, Jesus declared that "man shall not live by bread alone." Life, he saw, consists in other than material things. "Life is more than food."<sup>4</sup> "Life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth."<sup>5</sup> But Jesus was no ascetic. He himself came "eating and drinking," and he did not require ascetic practices of his disciples, much to the distress of the orthodox.<sup>6</sup> Jesus realized the necessity of "bread." He taught his disciples to expect God to provide the things they needed, and even to pray for bread; but he also taught that it is not by bread alone that men live, and that life is more than meat. He found men and women tremendously and unnecessarily concerned about what they should eat, and drink, and wear, and he sought to

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1 Mk. 10:30

2 Mt. 7:14

3 Lk. 20:36

4 Lk. 12:23, Mt. 6:25

5 Lk. 12:15

6 Mk. 7:1ff., 2:23ff., 2:18ff., Mt. 15:1ff., 12:1ff., 9:14ff., Lk. 6:1ff., 5:33ff.



divert their thoughts and energies to seeking first the most important things. "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own life?"<sup>1</sup>

Jesus simply saw material goods in their true light. He saw that they are temporary and perishable. Moth and rust can corrupt them, and thieves often break through and steal.<sup>2</sup> They are not even able to insure one's life upon earth, so that one may enjoy what one has accumulated.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, he urged his hearers to lay up treasures which cannot be corrupted nor stolen,<sup>4</sup> and exhorted them to "be rich toward God."<sup>5</sup> He saw, further, that possessions are often a hindrance to entering into life. He met a rich young man whose wealth was the only barrier that stood between him and the kingdom,<sup>6</sup> and another whose desire for a part of an inheritance was an obsession with him.<sup>7</sup> Jesus, therefore, taught his disciples to "keep yourselves from all covetousness;"<sup>8</sup> that it "is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven;"<sup>9</sup> that it is impossible to serve God and mammon,<sup>10</sup> "for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also."<sup>11</sup> He reproved Martha, who was troubled about many things, and begged her to follow the example of Mary who had "chosen the good part," which could not be taken from her.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, Jesus realized that worldly goods can be used as a means to a good end, and that they can be of service to one in gaining the things which cannot be taken away; and he illustrated this

1 Mk.8:36, Mt.16:26, Lk.9:25    7 Lk.12:13

2 Mt. 6:19    8 Lk.12:15

3 Lk.12:16ff.    9 Mt.19:23ff., Mk.10:23ff., Lk.18:24ff

4 Mt.6:20, Lk.12:33    10 Mt. 6:24, Lk. 16:13

5 Lk. 12:21    11 Mt. 6:21, Lk. 12:34

6 Mk.10:17ff., Mt.19:16ff., 12 Lk. 10:38ff.

Lk.18:18ff.

thought with the story of the unjust steward who made for himself friends "by means of the mammon of unrighteousness."<sup>1</sup> Jesus, thus, had much to say about material things, and about the more abiding spiritual realities; but at the basis of all that he taught on this subject we find the conviction to which he had come during his temptation - "Man shall not live by bread alone."

In his second temptation Jesus, as we have pointed out, refused to expect special protection against the dangers and hardships of life, as being implied in sonship. The son of God must not look for a type of protection which other men do not have. As Jesus reviewed the past, he did not find that the righteous men had been shielded against evil. He often referred to the fact that God had sent prophets, and that men had killed and scourged and persecuted them.<sup>2</sup> He himself saw the fate that befell John the Baptist, whom he described as "much more than a prophet."<sup>3</sup> Jesus, consequently, could not have but felt that he too would inevitably be subjected to such treatment, and, as a matter of fact, on many occasions he told his disciples that he would be condemned, mocked, and killed.<sup>4</sup> Not only did Jesus foresee all this, but believed that it was God's will that it should be so.<sup>5</sup> We have seen how the people around the cross tempted him to ask God to deliver him, and how he steadfastly refused. Jesus' own life is a contradiction of the faith that "God will give his angels charge over thee."

Never did Jesus makes promises of special privilege

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1 Lk.16:1ff.

2 Mt.23:34, Lk.11:49, 13:33

3 Mt. 11:9, Lk.7:26

4 Mk.8:31, 9:31, 10:33ff., Mt.16:21, 17:23, Lk. 9:22, 9:44, 12:50

5 Mk. 8:33, Mt. 16:23

in the face of danger to his disciples. On the contrary he told them that they must take up a cross in they would follow him.<sup>1</sup> He warned them that it would be costly indeed to be his disciple, and it would be well first to "sit down and count the cost."<sup>2</sup> For those who did accept the invitation to become followers, he predicted that they would be delivered up to councils, and beaten, and persecuted, and killed.<sup>3</sup> But not only must one be prepared to face persecution; one must "pray for them that persecute you."<sup>4</sup> His disciples must even pluck out their eyes, and cut off their hands, if those organs interfered with their devotion to God.<sup>5</sup> The one time when Jesus apparently contradicts this,<sup>6</sup> where he says, "Nothing shall in any wise hurt you," must be taken to refer to their real, and spiritual, rather than their physical, well-being. Mention has already been made of Jesus' reference to the Galileans whom Pilate slew, and those upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, where he unmistakably denies that misfortune is sent by God as punishment.

Jesus replied to this temptation, "Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord, thy God." The son should not doubt the reign of God; he should not seek to test God's providence; he should not make his faith depend upon such externalities. In fact, if one were to desire to put God to the test, one, by that very fact, displays a lack of trust in God. Jesus did not attempt to build faith upon such a foundation. People often asked him to show them a sign, that they might believe,

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1 Mk. 8:34, Mt. 10:38, 16:24, Lk. 9:23, 14:27

2 Lk. 14:25ff.

3 Mk. 13:9,13, Mt. 24:9, Lk.21:12ff.

4 Mt.5:44, Lk.6:28

5 Mt. 5:29f., Mk. 9:43,47

6 Mk.10:19



but he would not.<sup>1</sup> He knew that such miracles did not produce the kind of attitude that he sought to produce, for "mighty works had been done" in Bethsaida, and Capernaum, and Chorazin, and the people had not repented.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, when he did succeed in performing an amazing cure, he urged him who had been healed to tell it to no man; and often, when curious persons flocked around him, having heard of his mighty works, he would withdraw into the other towns.<sup>3</sup> Such was not the kind of faith that Jesus wanted. His reply to the tempter simply means that a son of God should trust God, and should not have the attitude of fear and doubt that would prompt him to put God to the test.

The opposite of this attitude of filial trust includes fear, timidity, doubt, and distrust; and Jesus was always addressing people who were anxious about what they should eat, drink, and wear. Jesus' message to such an audience was "Fear not." Time and again he repeated it.<sup>4</sup> He tried to show that such anxiety is unwarranted, for God feeds the birds and clothes the flowers, and "are not ye of much more value than they?"<sup>5</sup> He tried also to show the futility of this fear and anxiety; "which of you, by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life?"<sup>6</sup> The antidote for such anxiety is faith, or trust. Jesus taught that there is tremendous power in faith. "All things are possible to him that believeth."<sup>7</sup> "If ye have faith, and doubt not ... even if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea, it shall obey you."<sup>8</sup> He urged his disciples to

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1 Mt.16:1ff.,12:38f.

2 Mt.11:21ff., Lk. 10:12ff.

3 Mk.1:38,44, Lk.4:43,  
5:14, Mt. 8:4

4 Mk.4:40, 5:36, 6:50, Mt. 10:19,28,31,  
Lk. 5:10, 12:32.

5 Mt.6:25ff., Lk.12:22ff.

6 Mt. 6:27, Lk. 12:25

7 Mk.9:23

8 Mt.21:21, Mk.11:23, Lk.17:6

"have faith in God,"<sup>1</sup> to "believe in the gospel."<sup>2</sup> He rebuked them for their little faith,<sup>3</sup> and commented upon the great faith of the centurion.<sup>4</sup>

This attitude of trust in God that Jesus embodied in himself and sought to instil into others does not preclude forethought and provision, but only fear and anxiety. In many of his parables he insisted that his hearers be wise - building their houses upon the rocks, and providing oil for their lamps. Nor did Jesus himself court danger; he withdrew from Galilee when opposition developed to the point where he deemed it unwise to remain, and he kept his plans a secret even from his disciples during his last days in Jerusalem. When he sent out the twelve he warned them to be "wise as serpents," for they were going out "as sheep in the midst of wolves."<sup>5</sup>

Thus, throughout his ministry Jesus taught his disciples that they were not to expect God to shield them against danger, persecution, and death. Their lot was to be, not easier, but harder than that of other men. But he taught them to face all hardships with an active, victorious, unconquerable trust in God.

Jesus was tempted, finally, to believe that God would give to him dominion and power over others, for such had been the promise to, and the faith of, the sons of God. But Jesus realized that such an ambition would be tantamount to the worship of Satan - he would have to admire, submit to, and

1 Mk. 11:22      2 Mk. 1:15      3 Mk. 9:19ff., Mt. 17:17ff., Lk. 9:41  
4 Mt. 8:10, Lk. 7:9      5 Mt. 10:16

acknowledge the authority of the devil. He would have to repudiate what he had learned from his two former temptations. He would have to set his heart upon the things of the world, and he would have to expect miraculous and special intervention of God's part. And so Jesus rejected this hope, and refused to cherish such an ambition. Sonship, he concluded, does not mean that God will give to one dominion and power over others. The son must be a servant, and not a master, of others.

A contemporary of Jesus said of him that he, "existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, and ... humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death."<sup>1</sup> He himself said, "I am in the midst of you as he that serveth,"<sup>2</sup> and, "The son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."<sup>3</sup> Not only did he himself fulfil the ideal of a servant, but he impressed upon his disciples that they must seek to serve, and not to rule. He found them debating on the way who was the greatest; and he said to them, "If any man would be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all."<sup>4</sup> To James and John, who were desirous of occupying the chief seats in the kingdom, Jesus explained, "Whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all."<sup>5</sup> He taught that "everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."<sup>6</sup> He declared that "the Gentiles have lord-

1 Philippians 2:6-8.

2 Lk.22:27    3 Mt. 20:28, Mk.10:45

4 Mk.9:35

5 Mk.10:44, Mt. 20:27

6 Lk.14:11, Mt. 23:12



ship, ... but ye shall not be so."<sup>1</sup> To "gain the whole world" must not be their chief ambition.<sup>2</sup> He urged them to "sit not down in the chief seats;"<sup>3</sup> and in many of his parables he referred to his hearers as servants.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus rejected this temptation with the declaration, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Although he is a son of God, he will not ask God to give him authority over others. He will not compromise with that which is wrong. He will not acknowledge the authority of, nor be obedient to, any power except God. The true son must worship and serve God alone.

What does he mean by worshipping and serving God alone? What attitude is implied? Some time later, when Jesus was asked what is the greatest commandment, he replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."<sup>5</sup> Love is the word that best describes the attitude which one should have for God. But "love" is a rather general term, and we need to analyze it, and see what more specific attitudes compose it. The attitudes that Jesus emphasized are: sincerity, trust, reverence, humility, gratitude, responsiveness, loyalty, obedience, and the desire to imitate God. All of these are not brought out in this third temptation. There is no mention of love, gratitude, and sincerity. But we have seen how the second temptation brought out the attitude of trust; and in this third temptation, he doubtless means that the son should

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1 Lk. 22:25f.      2 Mk. 8:36, Mt. 16:26, Lk. 9:25      3 Lk. 14:7ff.  
 4 Mt. 6:24, 18:23, 20:1ff., 24:45ff., 24:14ff., Lk. 12:37ff.,  
     12:43ff., 16:1ff., 16:13, 17:7ff., 19:12ff.  
 5 Mk. 12:30, Mt. 22:37

be loyal, reverent, obedient, and humble, before God. These attitudes, moreover, are repeatedly reflected in Jesus' subsequent life and teaching.

Jesus himself is a perfect example of what he taught. His loyalty and obedience are displayed most unmistakably in the garden of Gethsemane, where, faced by death, he declared, "Not my will but thine be done." Here we have a clear reflection of his reply to the tempter. Jesus remained loyal and obedient to the will of God to the very end. His entrance into public life was probably due to the same spirit. "When he heard that John was delivered up" he began his preaching. In the face of every opposition, his loyalty to God was never supplanted by another. His friends, thinking that he was "beside himself", went out "to lay hold on him."<sup>1</sup> He was "without honor....in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house."<sup>2</sup> Jesus was no doubt speaking from experience when he said, "If any many cometh unto me and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, and yea, his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."<sup>3</sup> He chose the way of the cross as belonging to "the things of God," and he would not be turned aside from this path.

He insisted, moreover, upon such loyalty and obedience on the part of his followers. He taught them to pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done."<sup>4</sup> He said that the kingdom was open only to those who do "the will of my Father."<sup>5</sup> "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."<sup>6</sup> On another occasion he said, "Whosoever shall do the will of

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1 Mk.3:21

2 Mk. 6:4

3 Lk. 14:26

4 Mt.6:10

5 Mt.7:21

6 Lk. 11:28

God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."<sup>1</sup>

He denounced the Pharisees for "making void the word of God" by their traditions;<sup>2</sup> and in a certain parable, he favors the son who, although he was disobedient at first, later repented and "did the will of his father."<sup>3</sup> Thus, in the teaching of Jesus, the will of God is the supreme consideration in all affairs. It is the final court of appeal, the eternal standard, to which all problems should be taken for their true and ultimate solution.

The sons of God, according to Jesus, were to imitate God. They must love their enemies, "and do them good," because God "is kind toward the unthankful and evil."<sup>4</sup> They must be merciful, even as God is merciful.<sup>5</sup> They must even be perfect, "as your heavenly Father is perfect."<sup>6</sup> God is forgiving, and they must therefore "forgive men their trespasses."<sup>7</sup> They must be responsive to God, who scatters the seed, and prepares the great supper.

Jesus was equally insistent upon an undivided loyalty to God. In the kingdom of God there is no place for one whose love and loyalty are divided, or whose devotion is not able to survive the utmost demands upon it. Jesus knew that "if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand,"<sup>8</sup> and "he that is not with me is against me."<sup>9</sup> He therefore demanded undivided loyalty from his disciples - a loyalty superior to their love for riches, for family and friends, and superior to fear and anxiety. They must be

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1 Mk.3:35, Mt. 12:50, Lk.8:21      2 Mk.7:1ff., Mt. 15:1ff.

3 Mt.21:28ff.      4 Lk.6:35      5 Lk.6:36      6 Mt.5:48

7 Mt.6:12, Lk.11:4      8 Mk.3:24      9 Lk.11:23, Mt.12:30



prepared to pluck out their eyes, and cut off their hands, for the sake of the kingdom. He calls upon them to lose their lives for God.<sup>1</sup> And, finally, they must "endure to the end," through hatred, persecution, and death.<sup>2</sup>

At the very basis of all of this lies the principle to which he had come during his stay in the wilderness, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

While we are discussing the influence of the temptation experience upon the subsequent life and teaching of Jesus, we must return for a moment to a consideration of Jesus' self-consciousness. Are the temptations reflected at all in the attitude that Jesus took toward himself and toward his mission? Obviously, if one accepts the view proposed in this thesis, the relation between the temptation incident and the self-consciousness of Jesus takes on a different aspect from that which it is commonly believed to have. But it will not be nearly as different as one might suppose. The opinion most widely held is that Jesus came to the temptation believing that he was the Messiah; he was conscious of his own uniqueness; and the temptations represent unique problems that were presented to him, such as, should he endeavor to provide the people with material goods? should he manifest himself to them in a dazzling, miraculous manner? should he set up a worldly kingdom? These are problems that would arise only in the mind of a Messiah. But we have said that

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1 Mk. 8:35, Mt. 16:25, Lk. 9:24, 17:33.

2 Mk. 13:13

Jesus entered the wilderness simply as a son of God. There is no uniqueness in that. There had been many sons of God. And, furthermore, such uniqueness as the term did contain - e.g., special privileges and advantages over those who were not sons - Jesus rejected. He clung to the belief that he was God's son, but he refused to believe that it meant that his lot would be easier than that of other men. The assurance of sonship did not separate Jesus from others, but united him to them, and taught him that he would be subject to hardships not only equal to, but far greater than, those which others had to bear. He refused to believe that God loved him more than He loved other men. He interpreted sonship as giving rather than receiving.

On the other hand, we do not say that Jesus rejected uniqueness altogether. There is no getting around the fact that he believed and taught that he had been sent by God, and that his mission was to forgive sins, to call sinners to repentance, to save the lost. He believed that he knew the will of God, and that "everyone that heareth these words of mine and doeth them shall be likened unto a wise man." He taught with authority, and "spake as never man spake." There is certainly uniqueness in that.

But we go further than this. Unless one deals violently with the sources, it must be admitted that Jesus looked upon himself as the Messiah. It is inconceivable that faith in him as Messiah would have arisen after the crucifixion, had there been no talk of it before. There are too many incidents in our records which have no meaning, and have to

be stricken out, if we deny Jesus' Messianic consciousness. But when did this conviction dawn upon him? This is the problem upon which volumes have been written, and upon which no consensus of opinion has ever developed. Even in the New Testament we seem to have different views. Paul dated Jesus' Messiahship from the resurrection; Mark placed it at the baptism; Matthew and Luke at his birth; and the author of the Fourth Gospel traced it to the "beginning." That Jesus began his public ministry with such a conviction seems most unlikely. It is only because we read into the stories of the baptism and temptation something that does not belong there, that we come to the belief that he began his work as the Messiah. It seems more reasonable, and more in accord with the evidence, to say that this conviction grew upon him as he went about Galilee preaching. Mark tells us,<sup>1</sup> "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." Matthew brings out a causal, and not simply a chronological, connection between Jesus and John. In 4:12 we read, "Now when Jesus heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee, and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum." The Fourth Gospel makes the ministry of Jesus and John coeval, and Luke furnishes a link between this and the other two gospels. But Acts 10:37, 11:16, 13:24f., and 19:3f., indicate that the early church looked upon John as a predecessor. Consider, moreover, the fact that Herod thought that John had come back to life in the person of Jesus<sup>2</sup>, and the fact that Jesus' admirers were

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<sup>1</sup> 1:14

<sup>2</sup> Mk. 6:14



calling him John the Baptist.<sup>1</sup> Add to all this the unmistakable tendency of the Apostolic Age to minimize the dependence of Jesus upon John, and we have a body of evidence upon which to build the theory that Jesus entered upon his ministry as John's successor. The present writer takes the position that it was John's arrest that prompted Jesus to take up the task of preaching the gospel of the kingdom. The baptism and temptation were pure sonship experiences, and did not constitute a call to the ministry. When John's work was interrupted - a work about which Jesus spoke in the highest terms - he felt it his duty to carry on. This was Jesus' call, and "immediately leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum." Then as the time passed, Jesus, convinced that he had been sent by God, and convinced that he was doing God's work and revealing God's will, came to believe that he was God's "anointed" - the Messiah. His disciples, too, as they listened to him, observed his works, and lived with him, came to the same conclusion; until, at Caesarea Philippi, Peter gave expression to the faith that had been developing within him, and Jesus allowed himself to be called the "Christ." That Jesus accepted this term as a title is, of course, inconceivable. He accepted it because he believed that he was fulfilling, spiritually and essentially, what it was expected that the Messiah would do, and because he believed that the term was a true, fitting, and helpful designation of his work.

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<sup>1</sup> Mk. 8:28

We may say, then, that the temptation was the initial step in this process. Jesus was first of all a son of God in the sense that we have indicated - a son, who saw more in life than that which was simply tangible, who had a perfect trust in God, and who was loyal and obedient to God. Moreover he was profoundly impressed by John the Baptist. To such a son, then, came the news that John had been unjustly arrested; and Jesus responded with the determination to take up the work. The temptation, thus, prepared the way for all that followed.

In the second place, Jesus interpreted his work, and his Messiahship, in terms of his temptation experience. We have already seen how his teachings bear the stamp of his sojourn in the wilderness. And when he finally came to believe in himself as the Messiah, he did not hesitate to interpret Messiahship in the light of what he had learned through his temptations. It was generally expected that the Jewish Messiah would improve the material well-being of the people, would overcome their enemies and rule over them or destroy them, would establish his kingdom upon earth, and would perform many mighty works. But Jesus would not follow the popular path. When the Messiah<sup>ship</sup> was mentioned for the first time at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus immediately began to interpret it in terms of service and suffering. He knew that obedience to God's will meant persecution, and he knew that material goods would not satisfy man's deepest hunger. In other words, when Jesus began to feel that he was indeed the

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Messiah, he transformed the current conception to make it conform to those principles which he had adopted during his period in the wilderness.

What has been said about the Messianic consciousness of Jesus and its dependence upon the temptation incident, may be said also about his conception of the Kingdom of God, namely, that Jesus took a familiar term and clothed in with a new meaning. And, too, the transformation of this concept was done in the light of what his temptation had taught him. The Kingdom of God - its nature, its benefits, and the conditions of membership in it - constituted the heart of Jesus' message. We are told that he began his public ministry with the declaration, "The kingdom of God is at hand."<sup>1</sup> And when Jesus used this expression, his hearers had some idea of what he meant, for the expression was familiar to all. In another connection we have discussed what the prophets and teachers of Judaism had to say about the subject; and we discovered that the Kingdom of God was not a definite, clear, conception, but presented many divergencies. We tried to select some fairly common elements, and we concluded that it was generally agreed that in the kingdom, God's will would be obeyed and righteousness would prevail. But there were other features expected, too. It was thought that the kingdom would come through the direct and miraculous intervention of God. Its coming would be sudden and catastrophic, and would, of course, be a visible, earthly kingdom. Along with it would come prosperity, happiness, comfort, peace and long

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<sup>1</sup> Mk. 1:15



life for its members. Its realization, obviously, lay in the future. At least, the full realization of God's rule lay in the future. And finally, it was to be predominantly a Jewish kingdom. The Gentiles, if they survived at all, would be relegated to an inferior position. The disciples, presumably, cherished such a hope, for they debated as to who would be greatest in the kingdom, and two of them applied in advance for the seats of honor.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus saw something of value in this concept, for he retained it, and made it the theme of his preaching. But he transformed it considerably. He continued to believe in the righteousness of God's kingdom. But its coming, he taught, would not be sudden, miraculous, and catastrophic. God's reign, on the contrary, is a slow, natural, normal, gradual, process, like the growth of the mustard seed. Nor is the rule of God something to be looked for only in the future. Instead, it is a great, hidden force manifesting itself at the present time, like the power that makes the seed grow independently of man's efforts. It is not to be looked for only in the future, but is already at hand, "in your midst."<sup>2</sup> It is not a visible, external kingdom; it "cometh not with observation;" but is found in the hearts and minds of men. It is a kingdom that cannot be established by force. God, indeed, brings it about; "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;" God scatters the seed, and prepares the feast. But men must respond and cooperate. They must "seek" it first; must pray for it; must strive to enter;

<sup>1</sup> Mk. 10:35-45

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Plummer: Gospel according to St. Luke, p. 406.

must sacrifice for it. Nor is it the prerogative of the Jews. One's nationality does not insure one's membership. He shall enter the kingdom who "doeth the will of my Father."<sup>1</sup> It is hard for a rich man to enter; but publicans and harlots who sincerely repent "go into the kingdom of God before" the chief priests and elders.<sup>2</sup> One prerequisite for admission is to "receive the kingdom of God as a little child."<sup>3</sup> "They shall come from the east and west, and from north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God."<sup>4</sup> The blessings of the kingdom do not include wealth, power, and length of days, but abundant and eternal life. Jesus, therefore, taught that God is ruling now in the world; that he desires all men to come under His rule - to enter the kingdom; that anyone who approaches God in sincerity, humility, and trust, and who seeks to obey and imitate Him, thereby becomes a member of the kingdom; and in so doing he attains his highest joy, and finds the satisfaction of his deepest needs.

The relation between Jesus' idea of the kingdom and his experience in the wilderness is therefore obvious. Jesus took a familiar term, and clothed it with a new meaning, although preserving its essential, spiritual features; and in making this transformation, he did so in the light of the lessons which he had learned, and the principles which he had adopted, during his sojourn in the desert. Of course, not every feature of Jesus' conception of the kingdom is to be found in the temptation incident. Jesus did some thinking

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1 Mt. 7:21      2 Mt. 21:23ff.      3 Mk. 10:15  
4 Lk. 13:29, Mt. 8:11

after he left the wilderness. But no one who perceives that men live not by bread alone, who trusts God so implicitly that he has no desire to test God, and who is determined to worship and serve God alone, can be "far from the kingdom of God."

And so, in these, and in the "many other things which Jesus did" and said, we find reflected those principles and attitudes which he won in his struggle with Satan. We do not say that Jesus advanced a new solution of the problem of evil, nor that he advanced a new doctrine of providence, nor that he formulated a new conception of sonship. There is not an "original" word in anything that Jesus said to the tempter; all of his replies were taken verbatim from Deuteronomy 6 and 8. His genius is displayed, not in the new ideas which he brought out, but in the remarkable insight and discrimination which he employed in bringing forth new things out of an old treasure.

Dostoyevsky was one who sensed the fact that our temptation story is the work of a master. His judgment I consider true, and his words most appropriate. Says he: "If there has ever been on earth a real stupendous miracle, it took place on that day, on the day of the three temptations. .... From those questions alone, from the miracle of their statement, we can see that we have here to do not with the fleeting human intelligence, but with the absolute and eternal."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., Part II, Book V, Chapter V.



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